

THE
CAMPING GROUNDS
OF ISRAEL

By C. H. BRIGHT

The Camping Grounds of Israel

*A Pictorial History of the
Christian's Experience*

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DEDICATION

To all pilgrims who, having put the blood of the Passover Lamb over their door, have set forth, at God's call, for a pilgrimage through the wilderness of necessities and dangers, these pages are affectionately inscribed by a pilgrim of like passions with yourselves. They are not presented as a polished work of literature, but as an effort to appreciate the similarity between the material history of God's ancient nominal people, and the spiritual experience of his real people of to-day. They have been written from the heart, rather than the head. We say with the apostle: "I believed and **therefore** have I spoken" (2 Cor. iv:13). We have found out that "the flesh profiteth nothing" by actual experience. By actual experience we can also say with the apostle Peter, that we "have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter ii:3). And to bear testimony that He is gracious is to confess that one has failed—for grace means favor to the **undeserving**!

So, cheer up fellow-pilgrim! May these histories deepen in us the conviction that every necessity is but to introduce a supply, every danger is a forerunner of a deliverance, and that when circumstances seem to have hemmed us in so that we are absolutely in the power of the enemy, just then it is that we are about to see God-for-us as we never saw it before.

CARLOS H. BRIGHT.

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INTRODUCTION

While the mass of the people around us are, more and more, giving up their faith in the holy Scriptures as being the veritable Word of God, and while thousands of learned higher critics are striving to convince themselves that the Bible is but a collection of folk lore, myths and fables, Christians are becoming more and more convinced that "never man spake like this Man"—that there never was, nor is now, a book like this Book, the Holy writings of the prophets and apostles, Holy because in-breathed of God.

Unyielding as cast iron against all the premature conclusions of Science yet pliable as wax in the way it moulds itself to each man's conscience and presents him a life-like bust of his moral self.

Is that the reason the Bible is so hated? For never was a book so hated as this book is hated! The rising generation is forced to hear in the public schools and universities every witness against the Bible, but the Bible itself is not allowed to be heard in its own behalf. Much less are its apologists allowed to be heard. "They get that in the churches," it is said. But we have no law compelling the youth to go to church, but we have a law compelling them to go to the public schools.

How much those who have authority over colleges and universities must **fear** the Bible, when they will not allow even the bare reading of it!

Fellow Christian! Let us recognize that the real objection against the Bible proceeds from the heart, and not from the head. So let us not waste our time trying to convince people by historical proofs (though they are abundant), nor by the analogies drawn from God's writing in nature (though these are abundant, vivid and wonderful), but let us simply show how the book of God reveals the secrets of the human heart, how it speaks in language of Truth to the sincere conscience, how it traces the path that every faithful soul has to tread if he takes sides with God.

Above all—for this is the truth the apostles insisted on in their **sermons** and in their epistles—let us show the accurate and com-

plete correspondence between the prophecies and pictorial histories of the Old Testament, and the facts of redemption by atoning blood, power and guidance by the Holy Spirit's presence, discipline under a Father's hand, as plainly taught in the New Testament.

The following pages essay only a part of this task. We simply seek to show the analogy between the matter-of-fact history of God's nation of old, and the spiritual interpretation of it all, and its application to Christian experience, as the apostle suggests in 1 Cor. x:1-13.

So thoroughly does Paul believe that all the incidents recorded in that history were arranged by a divine providence, that he, in speaking of the rock that was smitten so that the waters might flow forth to quench the peoples' thirst, does not trouble to say, "that rock was a type, or picture of Christ," but says, "that Rock was Christ." It shows how thoroughly the apostles believed in the Spirit's inspiration of that record, as well as in its authenticity.

Here is the passage which is the basis of, and our authority for the interpretations given in the following pages:

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ;

"But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples (types, or figures), to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. . . .

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (typically is the Greek word), and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation (trial, testing) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted (tried, that is as the Israelites were tried

by hunger and by thirst, and by attacks of enemies) above that ye are able; but will with the temptation (**trial**) also make a way to escape (just as He opened the rock for Israel), that ye may be able to bear it."

In our opening article—the camp at Succoth—fear of being too lengthy and tedious made us leave out some preliminary considerations that now seem necessary for a right understanding of the starting point of this pilgrimage, of this Christian experience.

Who is truly a pilgrim? **Who** is a Christian in the full meaning of that name?

We believe it is important—important as a help to decipher the varied experience of Christians and harmonize them with Scripture—to distinguish between conversion and salvation. One is not complete without the other. A **sincere** conversion will press on to salvation. A salvation that is Scriptural has been preceded by conversion. Our authority for the statement is beyond dispute: it is in this history of Israel's experience, which was given us expressly, as shown in the passage cited above, to be for us a type or pictorial history of our experience, as believers, of redemption from bondage, of deliverance from wilderness trials, and of warfare against the spirits of heavenly places.

There was a time when the Israelites did not feel their bondage. Thus also with us.

There came a time when they **did** feel their condition (Exod. i:14) and they cried to the Lord (iii:7). Thus with every saved soul. We began to realize our slavery, then we realized our helplessness, then we cried to the Lord.

Is this conversion? Yes. Is it salvation? No? And yet there are thousands, perhaps the majority, of Christians who, having been aroused to "turn to God," do so, and then join the church, imagining that is all there is to salvation.

But Israel when they had cried to God, and when their cry was really heard, as God says that He had heard their cry, were they then saved? They were not, not yet. In one sense they

were **safe**, that is, if we fall back on God's almighty power, we may conclude that He will find **some** way of actually saving them from Egypt.

What was the first step towards this? He sends them a messenger, Moses. That messenger gathers the elders of Israel together and lays before them God's message (Exod. iv:30). The people were called upon to accept or reject. What did they do? "And the people **believed**: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and **worshipped**."

In this, too, we may recognize the analogy. For, notice, we are not speaking of what **should** be the experience of the majority, but of what **is**. At the time of conversion and joining the church the "believing" is believing in a general, inclusive, but indefinite, way that God sent Christ to be our Saviour. They accept Him, and commence to worship.

But Israel was not yet saved. No, they were still in Egypt, still under the lash; still in the dark as to how they were ever to escape; still groaning under their sorrows.

What came next? When things had come to an extreme, when Pharoah had become harsher and harsher in maintaining his dominion over his poor captives, this was God's way of salvation:

A lamb must be found, a lamb without blemish (xii:5) for every household a lamb. It must be slain and the blood sprinkled above the door and on each side of it. A destroying angel was to pass over the land that night and smite every firstborn son. But every house sprinkled by blood would be exempt from judgment, for "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (xii:13).

They did this: and then, while the destroying angel was executing God's judgment, the Israelites were to eat the flesh of the lamb roasted in fire. "And thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Pass-Over."

How wonderfully accurate is the picture! How closely it corresponds to the real redemption as set forth in the New Testament!

A spotless Lamb must be found—and lo! “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i:29). But the Lamb must be slain, and must pass through the fire of suffering, before He can become our food: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” (John vi:53). But before they fed upon the lamb they had to place the blood over the door. Thus with us: each soul must, by an act of faith, a transaction between his soul and God, must solemnly and deliberately and finally, put himself under the protection of the atoning blood shed for him at Calvary, thus entering into the new and everlasting covenant made by that blood. **Is** he then really saved? He must take God’s word for it. Israel did. God had said, “When I see the blood I will pass over you,” so they went through with their preparations and ate their lamb in peace. And the apostles, in their preaching of the Gospel, always put the language of faith in our mouths. “Who **hath** saved us,” they say, “we who are saved.” And in the same chapter in which our Lord declares that **only** by accepting His blood can we have life, He adds, “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood **HATH** eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day”—so He assures the believer of his final salvation at the last day. This implies that he will be kept.

And, just as with Israel, as soon as we really are Christians (by faith in the blood) our pilgrimage commences. We do not become pilgrims in order to **become** Christians, but having been made Christ’s own by faith in the blood, we then unavoidably become pilgrims and strangers on earth.

So **this** is God’s way of salvation! They were not to try and **fight** Pharaoh—match the undisciplined strength of a starving multitude against the skilled soldiers of the king—neither were they to accept any of his tempting compromises. They were to prepare to leave the land of their bondage, but, first of all, they were to seek and obtain an everlasting salvation from the judgment of God. They were to put themselves under the shelter of the atoning blood. The “passing-over” was God’s work, not their’s. Let them but trust the blood, and He would see to the rest.

He did. He made Egypt glad to be rid of them. They were thrust out forthwith. The pilgrimage began the moment redemption was accomplished.

It is remarkable that there should have been seven important camping grounds before they reached Sinai and seven momentous camps after they left Sinai.

Sinai marks a great change. Not only because the Law was given in Sinai, but also because the Tabernacle, God's provision of grace, when they had failed to keep the Law, was given there.

Then there was a final camp at Gilgal, when they had crossed Jordan.

The picture of pilgrimage in the wilderness of trial completed, then commences another and quite different picture of our warfare against the spiritual hosts who dispute the church's possession of the heavenly places (Ephes. ii:6 with vi:12).

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But, first, how came Israel to be in Egypt? They were there because Joseph's brethren, scoffing at his prophetic dreams, had sold him into Egypt.

How comes it that there is a "world" in which the believer was in bondage and from which he had to flee? Because the Christ's own nation rejected their Saviour, in which act of rejection the Gentile nations likewise took part (Acts iv:26, 27). This—the fact that the mass of the people around us reject the teachings of Jesus—produces the natural result that the "world" is under another ruler, Satan, the inspirer of the rejection.

Consequently, the moment a soul is awakened, he realizes he is in a hostile element, he realizes his bondage.

The awakened soul cries to God for deliverance (Exod. iii:7). The prayer is heard. God commences to deliver, but not all at once is it effected. There are hesitations, there are conflicts of soul (v:21); but, finally, this is the condition reached before the first journey commences.

As to God; awakened, believing, accepted as His people, put under the shelter of the atoning blood (Exod. xii:13).

As to the world; rebels and fugitives (Exod. x:24, xii:11).

Just as Pharaoh sought to induce Israel to make some kind of compromise, that would prolong their stay in Egypt, so the leaders of the world in which we live have many suggestions to substitute for God's simple plan of separation.

Moses had demanded that the people be allowed to go three days' journey into the wilderness. Three is the resurrection number—Christ's resurrection puts us outside of the world.

Pharaoh makes three counter-proposals:

1. They shall have liberty to worship their God in their own way, but they must abide in Egypt and worship Him there (viii: 25). That being rejected, he proposes:
2. That the men go, leaving the family behind (x:11). Moses rejects this also, so Pharaoh lowers the conditions, and
3. Offers to permit them all to go and worship, providing they leave behind their possessions.

All these compromises Israel refuses. They will go. They will all go, not a hoof shall be left behind.

These things have been written that they may serve as types for us (1 Cor. x:11). Let us be admonished by them. Ourselves, our families, our possessions, all must be held and used as redeemed. Many nominal Christians accept compromises, so they gradually come to regard their church as part of the world—the religious part, of course, but still, an integral part of the world.

But to have the peace of being under the blood, separation must be resolved upon. It was after Moses had firmly refused all compromise that God gave him the direction as to the Pass-over lamb, whose blood would shelter them from judgment.

If a truly awakened soul seeks to compromise and find some method whereby the world can endorse his religion, and he, on his part, endorses something of the world's rebellion and unbelief, the compromise will but make him trouble and delay things. There will be no peace with God enjoyed till a clear break is made with the world, and the soul puts itself definitely under the blood, with the pilgrim staff already grasped.

And here is where Israel's pilgrimage and our pilgrimage commences, called out of Egypt, delivered from judgment by the blood of the Lamb.

I. Rameses to Succoth

“And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle” (Exod. xii:37, 38).

Rameses means “child of the sun.” It was a fortress the Israelites, as slaves, had helped to build. It was named after one of their great kings, whose remains, as a mummy, are now in the British museum. He was the Pharaoh who oppressed Israel so cruelly, and father of the Pharaoh who pursued the Israelites and who was drowned in the Red Sea. He was a great warrior; he conquered Ethiopia and other lands.

So here, on the very threshold of their journey, we have a strange and wonderful parallel, a picture that every one who knows the rudiments of astronomy can appreciate. As the literal Israel was called out of the dominions of the “child of the sun,” to journey to a land unknown to them, so is the spiritual Israel, the Church, called out from all the realm described in the book of Ecclesiastes as “Under the sun”—all this kingdom in which the planets (“wanderers”) move in their never ceasing revolutions around the sun—to go to that undiscovered realm, in which because what of it is visible to the eye is at such an inconceivable distance from us that their movements can hardly be detected at all, we call them fixed stars; that calm, immovable heaven of heavens, that we see gazing at us every night, unperturbed and untouched by anything that can occur in our solar system of wanderers, where our earth, like the rest is a poor, restless wanderer in a path that never arrives anywhere. How graphically Solomon describes all our life “under the sun,” its mirths, its cares, its toils, its joys and its sorrows, as unceasing “vanity and vexation of spirit!” “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

To that “third heaven,” as Paul calls it, that Paradise, alto-

gether beyond and free from any of the influences of our planetary system, the the believer is journeying. We belong not to the world. Chosen in Christ before this world's foundation, we belong to an eternal realm beyond and apart from all man's ambitions, schemes, philosophies, religions (Ephes. i:4-10).

Such a calling *is* mysterious. No wonder Paul, even when in the very act of trying to explain it to us, lifts up an earnest prayer that a spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given us, so that we shall be able to "know what is the hope of his calling" (Ephes. 1:18). It is all so new, so unearthly. Its doctrines, its maxims, its hopes and fears, its rules of conduct, are all so different to what is done "under the sun."

Do we wonder sometimes that the Israelites were such failures—so peevish, so discontented, childish, forgetful of past deliverances, and the many tokens of God's hand? Should we wonder? Think of the degrading and depressing influence of several centuries of slavery. Think too, of the corrupting influence of the idolatrous religion with its sanctification of vice. Think of the suggestions of unbelief that must have been poured into their ears continuously by the "mixed multitude" that went out with them, as camp followers always do cling to the skirts of an army. And thus with the Christian. He is *so* inconsistent! We see it so clearly in others that we are astonished, bewildered at their inconsistencies. But when we think of ourselves we make allowances—see the years spent in the world and its corruptions and what false ideas we may have imbibed in our youth from the many false religions all around us! And then we too, alas, and every Christian, finds that while he, in his spirit, hears and obeys the divine call and goes up out of Egypt, clinging to his skirts there goes out along with him a very influential, though disreputable, "mixed multitude" of passions, tastes, habits and ideas that do not belong at all to the new man, but are all the native born sons of alien races. Some of these mixed multitude may have been converted, and become incorporated into Israel, but the rest had to be worn out and drop off through the prolonged and tedious wanderings in the wilderness.

Succoth, their first camping ground, lies northwest of the modern Cairo, on the border of the wilderness, but still in the land of Egypt.

The meaning of the name is given us in Genesis xxxiii:17, "booths," for the personification of the wandering pilgrim, Jacob, thus made booths. So his progeny, named after him, as they commence *their* pilgrimage, build their temporary shacks, huts or tents. And they must have felt the discomforts keenly, for they fixed the name of the place to be "Succoth." They had not the equipment of a modern army, with its portable kitchen and every convenience, carefully thought out and provided for months before. They had gone out in haste. The Egyptians just tumbled them out, being panic-stricken by the loss of their first born (Ex. xii:33). So we may be sure that that first night spent around the camp fires was anything but comfortable.

And is it not these *first* experiences of pilgrim life that impress themselves on our memories and help to form our new character? Something brings home to us that we really are *not* of this world, some loss, some deprivation, some dilemma, or something that hurries us on and *forces* us into separation.

"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed (in battle array) out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. xiii:17, 18).

God has reasons, for the path in which He leads us, that we know not of. In their recent conquest of Palestine, the British advanced from Egypt by the direct route adjacent to the sea. We might call this the common sense route. Then what would we call the route by which God took them?—a lengthy, round-about journey, through a rocky, barren wilderness? So true is it that God's ways are not our ways. We attach so much importance to what we propose to do, the end we are going to attain. Perhaps God may attach more importance to how we do it, and

to the spiritual education we are to receive in the way whereby we arrive at that end.

And yet there was sense and reason in taking them by the longest route. It was necessary to shield them from new foes at a time when their faith was in its infancy. Accustomed during two or three generations to being slaves, some years of freedom, of separation, and of discipline would be needed ere they could engage in battle against the enterprising and warlike Philistines.

God spares the young believer conflicts that are beyond the scope of the truth he has learned. The wilderness will give him conflicts enough, but they will be personal, trials as to his own obedience and patience, tests of his faith in God as his Father, rather than appeals to faith in the victorious power of a Risen Lord. The warfare against the hosts of wickedness that occupy the heavenly places is a task reserved for those who have laid hold of death and resurrection with Christ (Eph. ii:5-7 and vi:12-17). We need first a little humbling knowledge of ourselves, such as is acquired by being in a wilderness where privations tempt to murmuring, and where our shameful murmuring is responded to by acts of mercy and of grace on God's part.

Moses had already received *his* wilderness experience. In the diffidence and mistrust of himself that he showed when God thrust upon him this exalted commission, we see how sincerely humbled he had become. Thus he was fitted to receive and carry out without question, these unexpected and (seemingly) unreasonable commands of the Lord. The self-importance he once had has entirely disappeared; instead thereof we find an ability to rest in the all-sufficiency of the great I AM who has kept the burning bush from ever being consumed.

"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had strictly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." What a testimony to faith in resurrection! For why should he care where his bones were if he were never going to be incorporated again? That Israel will some day be a nation in Canaan he fully believed, and he also fully believed that God would raise

his dead body and that he, in his body, would dwell among his people and enjoy, with them, the fulfillment of all God's promises. Of course we, by the New Testament, know that he will enjoy more, much more, than all this. But as "the greater always includes the less," we recognize that Joseph's faith as to earthly blessings will not be put to shame.

The children of Israel, by thus sacredly carrying with them the patriarch's bones wherever they went, were bearing testimony to their belief that he had not ceased to exist, and that they should again see him in the flesh and enjoy his presence with them in the land of Canaan.

And what may this mean to us who are Israelites only in the sense of being, like Abraham, believers, and who are not taking a literal journey through a literal wilderness, but whose wilderness has come simply in the form of adverse circumstances, the natural consequence of separation from the worldliness we describe as Egypt? Is it not this—that we hold, with religious care and unshakeableness, to the belief made sure to us by our Lord (Luke xx:38) and His apostles (2 Cor. v:8), that those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, still exist and enjoy consciousness, being with Him, their Lord; and that when He comes they, now with Him, shall come with Him, and resume real bodies, such as they had here, but made more perfectly fit to be bodies for their spirit's habitation (1 Thess. iv:14; 1 Cor. xv:44)? This is the unchanging testimony of all real Christians, throughout the centuries of wilderness wanderings.

And may we not add—very reverently—this comparison? As Joseph was a type of Christ, and that as He, our Lord, when about to leave this earth, instituted the Supper, saying, "This is my body and this is my blood of the new covenant, this do in remembrance of Me," the church that does this, shows forth His death till He come (1 Cor. xi:26). Thus she testifies to her faith in His resurrection, to his living in the glory, to the certain hope of meeting Him when He comes in like manner as they had seen Him disappear and go into heaven—and they had seen him in a body that could be seen and handled, a real body of flesh and bones (Acts i:11 with John xx:27 and Luke xxiv:29).

II. Succoth to Etham

“And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness” (Ex. xiii:20).

In their first journey—from Rameses to Succoth—they had dared to sever the ties that bound them to Egypt. The die was cast, their Rubicon crossed, their ships burnt. They thus cast themselves upon the Almighty, though invisible, imageless God (Heb. xi:27). Those who have not lived amongst people accustomed all their life to have, as a god, a visible image to whom to pray, can hardly realize what it must have meant to the Israelites to dare to defy all the visible gods of Egypt, and to be cast upon the invisible God of their fathers whose name Moses had invoked, and to whose worship he had called them. Their long sojourn in Egypt had familiarized them with idolatry, and many of them had been seduced by it. There is a fascination about image worship. The heart of man responds to the deification of his own passions. Besides, that class of religion provides an endless round of festivities, under one pretence or another. There is always something to see, to do, or to enjoy.

But they had dared to break with all that, and cast themselves upon Jehovah, whom Moses had preached to them. He immediately responds, for “the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

This was not all that the presence of the Lord in the cloud would be for them—that would be revealed as the circumstances made their need known and felt—but it was their first urgent need—guidance, leading, light on their path, even by night.

What the cloud pictures to us is plainly set forth in 1 Cor. x:2: “and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud.” And similarly of us Paul says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. xii:13).

And just as the cloud was not given until they were really out

of Egypt, just so in the epistle that teaches us all about the way of salvation, there is no mention of the Spirit until we by repentance (Rom. ii:4-10) and faith (Rom. iii:22-28), have really come into justification (Rom. v:1). And then it is but to explain how the love of God was made known to us (Rom. v:5). As an abiding presence He is not mentioned till (in viii:1) we have shouted the triumphant cry, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." That being settled, we have the cloud, the presence that takes charge of us, to guide us through all our wilderness journey: "as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii:14).

"He took not away the pillar of the cloud." Many a time He had to rebuke them. Sometimes He had to chastise them severely. He even had to prolong their wanderings in the wilderness far beyond the time that was really necessary; but for all that, He never took away the cloud that, for us, represents the Holy Spirit's presence. Centuries after Nehemiah refers to the fact thus—having recounted first their many failures, he adds—"Yet Thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go" (Neh. is:19).

From Succoth ("booths") was their first rallying point and camp ground, to Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. As nothing else occurred there, but the appearing of the cloud, we must take this as meant to be the lesson of the second camping ground. The name, Etham, seems to mean simply, "the edges," that is, of the wilderness. And truly it was so. The dreariness of the wilderness was not yet tasted. And when we have come out of Egypt and have thrown ourselves upon God for protection and guidance, we do not all at once come into real wilderness trials. It is necessary to know the presence of the cloud first. A wilderness without the cloud, what would it be? It is quite a mistake to suppose that *any* cross ever brings us nearer to God. The natural effect of affliction is to harden. See the result of calamity

of any kind on those who know not God! We see examples in the papers daily, He was bankrupt, or he had a painful and incurable disease, or he was fast becoming blind, so he murders himself. She had lost her purity, betrayed by a false lover, her life was wrecked, and she is found dying through her own hand. Although there is another class of mind that, when in despair, flings itself into mad pleasure, reckless of all consequences.

Only those who know redemption and the Comforter's presence can stand the wilderness. The wilderness brings down their self-conceit and self-trust, but the Comforter builds them up in wonder, and reverence of and trust in the God of all grace.

To appreciate what the cloud was to Israel we must transport ourselves in imagination to a rainless country like Egypt. We lived many years on the coast of Peru—hundreds of miles as rainless as Egypt. We recalled with horror that some English hymn writer had sung the glories of “a cloudless sky, a waveless sea.”

In a small schooner, becalmed under a tropical sun, off the coast of Ecuador, we tasted the awfulness of a waveless sea, and in Peru for half the year we had a cloudless sky, and rainless always.

How beautiful the distant clouds looked, away off there on the peaks of the lofty Andes! We could not but feel, “What must be the soothingness of being under a cloud, like those Indians who live up there in that happy fertile region of clouds amid the valleys and mountains!”

Therefore that cloud must have been a welcome sight to those ex-slaves, accustomed to labor in the fields under the sun of Egypt. It was a proof to them of the *all* mighty power of Jehovah. He could give a cloud where there is nothing in nature to form clouds. He could give a shelter to His people, where no other people had a shelter. For we learn from Psalm cv:39 that “He spread a cloud for a covering.” Thus in their marches they were sheltered from a too ardent sun. The cloud covered them as well as preceded them. Thus obedience and shelter were associated, for then the cloud moved on, they must needs move on too, or be shelterless. We know that they did move on—however inconvenient it might

have been for them (Num. ix:21), so we cannot say what would have happened to them had they not have moved with the cloud. But we have seen, in our own experience and that of others, how sad a thing it is to lag behind the moving cloud, and how calamitous it is to go on when the cloud has not moved at all.

But see what an absolute submission this implies! We do not mean the mere resignation of a *broken* will, but the cheerful acquiescence in all the Lord does, by one who is resting in the unchangeable character of His love.

The importance the Holy Spirit attaches to this matter is shown by the way in which this absolute dependence upon the cloud for guidance is repeated and repeated. Nine long continuous verses are given to it. We will quote but a part: "And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. And so it was when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month or a year" (Num. ix:15-23).

But to be thus absolutely under the guidance of that protecting presence, one naturally is forced into independence of man. Israel moved as a whole, tarried as a whole, under one commander. The Church at Jerusalem was one entity, of one heart and soul, all of them recognizing the apostle's leadership, all seeking to work in unison. Today we have nothing that even remotely corresponds to it. Besides the great worldly denominations, each considering itself *The Church*, we have several dozen of small denominations who claim they are not, and cannot be "a sect," because the name they have chosen for themselves is a Scriptural title. Each one demands loyalty to itself, as the bond of fellowship. But to be loyal to one you have to break with the others! How

then can one avoid the charge of "independency," and "lawlessness?"

All concrete unities demand obedience as the price of support. How then can one look to the cloud for guidance? Well, as a matter of fact the great majority of Christians do not look to, are not in dependence upon the moving of the cloud. Thus they take themselves from under its shelter. It has gone on, and they have lagged; or, they have gone on regardless of its resting over a certain place, or over a certain group of believers.

In the great apostle Paul we find a safe example, for we know that he was given to be an example to believers (1 Tim. i:16). And he, while fervently cherishing fellowship with "*all saints*" (Ephes. i:15; Col. i:4), boldly claims for himself an absolute independence of human control as to his service, and of accountability to human tribunals. To me, he says, it is the very least thing that I should be judged of you (the assembly at Corinth), or of man's day (1 Cor. iv:3—Greek). He valued his privilege of watching for the moving of the cloud (Rom. xv:23); and thus he experienced its shelter.

But the moving of the cloud has a wider application than the evident one of guiding the Lord's servants as to their place of service, and all the saints as to their place of residence. In all epochs of the Church's pilgrimage we need to watch and observe what is the special sphere of the Holy Spirit's operation, or what are the truths He is today most bringing to the light and insisting on. In conversation recently with a member of an unsectarian sect—unsectarian in that their name is *quite* Scriptural, but intensely sectarian as to the way they view and treat other Christians—we propounded this question to him. He confessed that he had never supposed that there was any such special epochs in the Holy Spirit's operation. Probably the majority never give it a thought.

But it is worth considering, or we may find ourselves acting in independence of Him (the Spirit). For instance, we may be consuming our heart's energies, sticking for some question of Scriptural form and procedure, when the dying around us need first

aid treatment. Just as we see in some memoirs lately published as to the work of chaplains in the Great War. Some, indeed, realized that men passing into eternity needed the ministry of the great fundamentals of God's remedy for sin and ruin. But there were others, who seemed perfectly oblivious that men have hearts and consciences and have to meet the Great Judge.

There have been times when the Spirit of God seems to have been hovering over a certain formula, as in the days of Athanasius, when Christians everywhere longed for a clear statement as to just what to believe as to the two-fold nature of our Lord. And there have been times, as in the days of the Wesleys and the Whitfields, when, most certainly, not creeds, but the need of real, spiritual regeneration was what the Spirit of God was pressing upon the hearts of His servants.

Oh, that we could incite in the hearts of the saints—of *many* of the saints—the longing to know, and the willingness to ascend into the watch-tower to observe, where is the cloud hovering just now? From every narrow corner we hear the cry, “We are *it*.” And yet the soul, dissatisfied with these rival claims, still asks, “Where is *He*?”

III. Etham to Pi-hahiroth

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye camp by the sea. For Pharoah will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (Ex. xiv:1-3).

Judged in the light of common sense—which so many tell us should be our guide—this was a badly chosen camp ground. On the south they had a range of mountains, on the north, a broken and desert country, and on the east the Red Sea blocked their pathway. Pharoah at once jumped to the conclusion that Moses had made a strategic mistake, and he resolves to take advantage of it.

This, as verse 4 shows, was exactly what God designed. But it was not *Moses'* planning. *He* could not have foreseen the marvellous deliverance God would effect. Probably to him, too, it seemed an unwise move. But the Lord had so commanded, and Moses was but the executor of God's orders.

Do not let us be dismayed then, if we should find that a step we took in faith, under the conviction that the Lord had thus answered our prayer for guidance, has led us into a difficult situation. We shall be tempted to doubt the path of faith, and to blame ourselves bitterly for not going by our common sense. But wait a while. See if God has not some especial object in putting you into difficulties. Perhaps He has for you an undreamed-of deliverance.

If we will pause to consider the meaning of the names given, the crisis is seen to be even more acute. Pi-hahiroth means, "Mouth (or opening) of deliverance." It was a range of mountains 1,500 to 2,000 feet high, with precipitous cliffs running right down to the sea, shutting off their escape southward. It ended in Ras Atakah, "headland of deliverance." This is about twelve miles south of Suez. On the opposite shore of the sea is a tongue of land known as Ras Mussa, "headland of Moses."

Migdol, "tower," a fortified post of Egypt's soldiers, was another difficulty. While to the north was Baal-Zephon, which some translate, "Baal that looks out." It was a city especially dedicated to the worship of Baal. Thus their camping "over against" it was like an open defiance of Baal's power.

Jehovah had said, "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment" (Ex. xii:12). The doom of the firstborn was one judgment which their gods were powerless to prevent. The final deliverance of Israel by the Red Sea shall be another. In their victorious passage of the sea we read that "in the morning watch the Lord *looked* unto the hosts of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." We doubt not that this is a sarcastic allusion to the meaning of the name of their god—Baal that looks out, or watches, for the Egyptians.

The Egyptian mythology was of the very lowest order. In the very form of their gods and goddesses there was the evidence that it originated through the perpetration of acts of immorality of the basest nature that the human race has ever been guilty of. The demons that inspired those acts led them to worship, as gods, the accomplices or results of those acts. Thus the demon himself is virtually worshipped.

While this country, with a history dating back but four or five hundred years, has not, and never had idolatry except in its milder forms, who knows but that we are approaching it now, in the exaltation of the physical pleasures, and the trampling under foot of all those higher standards of morals which had their origin in Christianity? As Evolution is boldly taught in all the higher institutions of learning, what wonder is it that many newspaper writers are speaking of the dog as our "brother"? The belief that man evolved from beasts will surely lead back to the degradation of morals to which the idols of Egypt bear witness. Are we to see again enacted the pre-Christian spectacle of Rom. i:28? Forasmuch as they have not chosen to retain God in their knowledge—God now fully revealed in Christ, the Saviour God who gave Himself as an offering for the sins of the human race, and whose

blessed Gospel of love has been published in all the languages of the world—God will leave them to their own fancied light, sparks of their kindling, and they will of their own choice, sink back to the licentiousness and murders of ancient Rome and Greece, and even to the gross degradation of more ancient Egypt and Babylon.

However this may be, as in all ages the essentially combative elements are the same, we may safely assert, that in the case of each soul He saves and delivers from Egypt's bondage, God throws down the gauntlet to Baal—defies him face to face, snatches his prey from his very grip.

It is well to understand this. It will save us from the mistake of thinking that a cowardly policy can be God's policy. "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,*" is the promise given us.

It will save us likewise from being unduly dismayed if we should find that, having boldly separated from Egypt, we found instead of everything in our pathway becoming so easy—as the popular evangelists always hold out the bait that "it pays to be a Christian"—we found thorns and rocks on every hand, and at times, our way so hemmed in that, unless the *Lord* delivered us, dire disaster awaited. Thus the writer found shortly after having commenced the Christian life, and being suddenly thrown on his own resources, employments seemed to be abundant that demanded sacrifice of conscience. One involved working on the Lord's day, another involved attendance at the services of a worldly church. Another involved coaxing people to buy such religious fables as "Lives of the Saints." The writer resisted the temptation. Did the Lord then open a path into a bed of roses and wealth? He did *not!* He but confirmed His own word that "Strait is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life."

As we do not aspire in these pages to so great a task as describing all the wonderful wilderness history of Israel, we pass over the typical meaning of the passage of the Red Sea as applied to the Gospel. That which corresponds in the New Testament is, we believe, 1 Cor. x:2 and Rom. vi:3-7.

As the first name given in the camp ground the Lord led them to is Pi-hahiroth—mouth of deliverance—we call attention to this

narrow stretch of country in which they were hemmed in, and that must have seemed like a mouth that would soon swallow them up. But by the Lord's presence with them it became a mouth, or opening, or deliverance to liberty.

The deliverance was entirely the work of God. Yet two things were needed on their part if they were to be the objects of that deliverance. One was, a deep conviction of the helplessness of their predicament—they were sore afraid, and cried unto the Lord (xiv:10). Second, there had to be faith in the promise of God to hold back the waters of the Red Sea; “and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.” So, as Heb. xi:29 says, “By *faith* they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.”

Has the reader ever been in a November storm on the Atlantic? Has he known what it feels like to lie in the trough of the sea, the ship one minute laying down on its starboard side with the waves about to engulf us, and then, groaningly rolling over to larboard as if about to turn turtle? Has he ever been on deck as the ship, head-on to the gale, slid down the vast wave as though aiming for the bottom of the sea, and then, rearing itself, faced another wave “mountains high” standing over it, a vast and awful mass of green water about to leap on us and smother us all? Then he can appreciate what must have been the feelings of the Israelites as they were called to, “by *faith*,” trust themselves between those two walls of green waves. How they must have realized that only the hand of God could be holding back those two threatening walls!

What a vivid picture of the path of faith the Christian—every Christian, if he would be loyal—is called to! *Kept* by the power of God, as Peter says, unto salvation; but it is “through *faith*.”

If the path, if circumstances, were always easy, if prayer was always answered as soon as uttered, where would be the test of faith? Only by severe trials can we have rich experiences of the Lord's deliverances. When the Armistice was declared in November, 1918, one of the first statements that attracted our attention

was that of an American soldier who had gone through the terrible battles of Chateau Thierry and of the Argonne forest: "Not for a million dollars would I have missed this experience! Yet not for a million dollars would I go through it again!"

When the crisis arrived it was night time. Dark! and they were to "move forward," God said (xv)! Move forward into the dark waves! What a command! What a predicament! But if we will walk on in firm faith, with *no mixture of doubting* (Matt. xiv:31), we shall see new wonders of the Lord's deliverances, for "the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all night."

Is it not remarkable that the first two great steps in their flight for liberty took place in the night? It was midnight when the firstborn were slain, and the Egyptians hurried the Israelites off. Again it is night when they had to venture into the Red Sea. Truly God's ways are not our ways: we would choose a "favorable time;" He chose the dark night. Do not let us suppose that because we cannot *see*, or feel, the Lord's presence, that therefore He is not with us. If we continuously had the *consciousness* of His presence, **would not that be equivalent to walking by sight, not faith?**

It is for night seasons that we have the consoling words of the prophet: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isa. 1:10).

IV. Pi-hahiroth to Marah

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah" (Ex. xv:22, 23).

Three, we understand to be the number symbolic of resurrection. Moses had demanded of Pharaoh that Israel be allowed to go three days' journey into the wilderness. They have now done so in the full sense. They have crossed the Red Sea—type of our death with Christ—and they have marched into the wilderness for three days. May they, can they, now worship? Ah! there are deeper things awaiting us than we know of when we start out. If worship consisted of merely repeating prayers and singing hymns, then no deeper experience is needed. But no sacrifices were yet offered, and the ritual of their worship was not given them till the third month after their leaving Egypt, and not actually set up and used till the first month of the **second year** (Ex. xl:17).

Here is something we all need to take to heart. Theoretically every one in the Church has a right to lead in worship, to pray, to sing. But in practice, few may have passed through those searching wilderness experiences that humble, that teach us to cease from confidence in the flesh, and that stimulate to a faith founded exclusively upon God's own pure grace to us in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii:3).

When we first commence our pilgrim journey, it seems to us that the books of Exodus and Numbers contain so many unnecessary wilderness trials—so much repetition. As for ourselves, we think, we are qualified not only to worship, but to march on to conquer and to take possession of Canaan at once. But as years pass by, and we find by experience the meaning of Marah, and Rephidim, and Meribah, and the other testing places, we no longer wonder that Israel spent forty years in the wilderness; rather we wonder it was not eighty.

What a triumph the passage of the Red Sea was! Well might Moses and Miriam sing. And the people sang; even the women sang. It was a day of exaltation. After such a display of God's power on their behalf, what wonders might they not expect from Jehovah's hand? Surely their wilderness needs would be a small matter to **Him!**

And lo! three days searching for fresh water and finding none! Then, when at last some is found, it is bitter! What a disappointment!

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

The only tree the Scriptures speak of as having healing virtue is the tree of life in Paradise; and Adam and Eve had preferred to prove the tree of knowledge of good and evil: so that tree belonged to a lost paradise. Ezekiel tells us of trees which shall give healing (xl:7, 12); but they belong to a future time when the Cherubim of God's glory shall return to a purified earth. On what principle, then, could those trees be available for wilderness necessities?

It might also be alleged that those trees are to be used for the healing of men, while at Marah the need was of something to heal material elements. But the answer to this difficulty may be found in the clauses that follow, which are given distinctly as being part of their Marah experience:

"There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee."

So they were to apply the lesson given by the healing of the waters, to the much wider application of the healing of their bodies. And yet this was also made dependent upon their walk.

It is important to remember that they were not yet under Law. So the obedience He asks from them here, must not be taken in the rigid sense of obedience to Law as regards salvation, but simply in the same sense that we find given in the Epistles, that the Christian's walk may bring approval or it may bring chastisement, as shown in Heb. xii and other places. **Their not being yet under Law really does** make a difference in these practical applications of their experience is shown by the fact—which any reader can verify for himself by glancing through Exodus and Numbers—that although they murmured five times before they were under the Law, in no instance were they chastised for their murmurings, nor even scolded! But after they became under the Law, their murmurings brought forth severe rebuke and chastisement.

But what about the tree? How can something which essentially belongs to a future Paradise be available in the Wilderness? The only solution we can give to this difficulty is that which Paul gives us in Eph. i:14: the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. An "earnest" is a part of the thing promised. Not a very large part, generally, but nevertheless, a portion of the very same thing that is expected. There is much buying and selling of real estate going on around us in California, therefore we have known many examples of the "earnest" of a promised price being given. A man engages to buy a ranch for, say, \$10,000, and he deposits \$500 as an earnest. It is but a small part of the total, but it is a part, and just as truly money as the whole sum will be, for the \$500 will be reckoned as a part already paid. Or, it may be the one who sells that has to give you an "earnest" of possession. Perhaps he cannot vacate the house immediately, but he allows you to come in and pitch your tent, and commence to make use of all the fruits of the orchard and field.

Now the Holy Spirit is here to bring home to our souls, to make clear to our minds and make it the objective of our faith, all that is truly for us in and through the risen Christ, now seated at the right hand of God as the Conqueror of sin and death—and it is

for us that He is Conqueror (Heb. ii:14; 2 Tim. i:10; Rev. i:18).

Moses had cried unto the Lord, and in response "the Lord showed him a tree." But it is manifest that we will not cry unto the Lord with any great earnestness as long as we have hope in human help. There is, first, the cry; then, the Lord revealing to us that healing tree; then, our appropriation of it by faith—Moses cast it into the waters.

And may we not say, making use of highly figurative language, that Jesus was nailed, for our sin, to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and that His atoning blood has changed it into a tree of Life? For where can good and evil be known to their limit, known in their very essence and their full outcome, like they are known in the cross? Unbelief, rebellion, hatred of God are there seen in their extreme manifestation. And by that cross also is goodness known, good in its absolute meaning, and good in its practical, resultant application, even to the wiping out the sins of those evil men who nailed the good One to a cross.

Sin atoned for, that cross becomes a tree of life, available even now.

V. Marah to Elim

“And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters” (Exod. xv:27).

That this plentiful provision in the matter of water should occur immediately after the experience of bitter waters, and the special promise of blessing then given, makes this Elim plenty seem like an “earnest” of what might have been Israel’s if only they **had** “diligently hearkened to the voice” of Jehovah, their God.

Anyway, all those who walk the pilgrim path can testify that not only do they have their Marahs, but He who “knoweth our frame” and pitieh as a father provides also an Elim, so that we should not be pressed beyond what we are able to bear.

Twelve wells of water! the number of completeness, perfection as to earthly things, suggestive therefore of absolute plenty. And this just after Marah! Well, is it not so? Our path is not **always** “bitter;” we do have seasons of refreshment, seasons when “the right hand of the Most High” seems to be visible.

We have all read what a palm tree is to the Arab. He could live entirely off the palm tree, and clothe himself, too! So to the Israelites the seventy palm trees signified a superabundance.

We do not know how the reader will apply Marah and Elim to his own wilderness experience. Those poor in this world’s goods will naturally remember the Marahs of bitter poverty and the Elims that were a grateful rest from extreme pressure. Those having sufficient of this world’s goods, so as not to feel, any particular **pinch** of scarcity, will remember the Marah where sickness weakened them or some bitter affliction of the spirit. To them Elim would be the place or the epoch when they experienced the contrast to the harrowing trials of the spirit; when sweet, divine peace took possession of their souls, and all thirsting was assuaged, all sense of loneliness gone, and when the riches of God’s grace to them might well be compared to seventy palm trees, bearing their fruit aloft, near heaven, but whose trunks

may easily be climbed, if any one really is in earnest to procure the dates.

Twelve wells, seventy palm trees—it was an ideal camping place, and “they encamped there by the waters.” This time there was no murmuring; they were pleased. Why, then, not stay there? Make it a great center and furnishing depot; a place for recuperation. This has always been the wish of Christians from Pentecost to the present moment. But it was not God’s way. They were in but the second month of their departure from Egypt when they received orders to forsake Elim and push on further into the wilderness. And thus it has been in the history of the saints. It is very evident that the twelve apostles thought that Jerusalem was going to be the great center, the new Zion (Acts viii:1, 4; Isa. ii:2-4), and were delaying to obey the distinct *command* they had received to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (Matt. xxviii:19). So the Lord takes up a man that was even more of a Jew than they were, and sends **him** “far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts xxii:21). Jerusalem is dropped, and the Spirit makes a fresh start at Antioch, and gives the name by which His saints are to be known (Acts xi:26).

But neither did Antioch, nor Alexandria, nor Rome remain centers long. The Spirit is always moving on. This is a wilderness, and the church is but a tabernacle, not a temple. Few indeed are the Christians who recognize this. What happens generally is, that if the Spirit has worked in any special way and given tokens of approval of any special line of testimony, there are always brethren with an ambition for management, who want to build up some institution, or theological seminary, or something—we forbear to mention any more kinds of institutions, for we merely want to illustrate our theme, we have no wish to attack other Christians—something or other that will give definite form to the truths to which they have been witnessing and will insure their continued propagation. But, uncomfortable though it makes us, and though unwelcome be the admission, all past Church history, up even to the moment in which we write this, shows that by the time the truth, for which martyrs have bled,

triumphs over its enemies and gains a place of power, it has become so deteriorated by the assimilation of other elements, that though it still may retain the name of the truth it once witnessed to, the soul of it has fled. It even becomes the persecutor of the later children of that same truth, for which it once stood as God's witness!

But we see, not only in pages of history of long-flown centuries, but, even today, the movements that were intensely and radically spiritual, giving honor, we mean, in a special way, to the Holy Spirit as the Giver, the Controller and User of all "gifts," all genuine ministry, now taking form, assuming importance, and straining every nerve (and the purses of their disciples) to build something that will be a monument to their name, and insure (as they foolishly imagine) perpetuity to those particular doctrines, or practises, that they have been witnessing to.

But they will be left behind—the cloud will move on! The wilderness will never have a metropolis—the Church's resting places are but camps.

VI. Elim to the Wilderness of Sin

"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of Egypt" (Exod. xvi:1).

In the list of camping places given in Num. xxxiii we are told that when they removed from Elim they encamped by the Red Sea, and that it was after this that they encamped in the wilderness of Sin.

But as Num. xxxiii is simply a list of the places—omitting mention of the special things that happened in those places—we conclude that the account in Exodus omits many places mentioned elsewhere because there was no special lesson in it **for us**. The things that were written about them were written for *our* admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. x:11).

Believing this, we venture to say that the things that happened in the wilderness of Sin—"which is between Elim and Sinai"—are pictures of experiences passed through by the Christian after he has had tastes of God's mercies as shown in Marah and Elim and before he has gotten himself under the yoke of legal bondage.

For Sinai, as we will perceive more clearly when we come to it, is the great crisis, the turning point. The place where Rom. vii is learned, and where (let us hope, Rom. viii is afterwards learned).

But as yet they have not come to Sinai; they are in the wilderness called Sin.

The Hebrew word Sin, means Mud, probably because the shores of the sea were muddy. The spiritual application is obvious: The experiences between Elim and Sinai bring out what we are as being earthly. The failures recorded are not such as we might blame Satan for, but are simply the natural weakness of poor human beings whose frame is dust (Psa. ciii:14). They were hungry; they had a short memory as to the cruel bondage of Egypt, but a long memory as to the savoury food they had enjoyed there. They murmur, they wish they had stayed in Egypt. It was bad, it was very bad; but God's response is not

chastisement, nor even scolding! He simply meets their need: "I will rain bread from heaven for you."

But after the Law was given, how different! He both scolded and chastised them when they murmured.

Is it not strange? Is there not some mystery—some secret here, that it would be to our profit to search for, perceive and apply to our own soul's experience?

Of course, if the great, unsettled question before our souls is our final salvation, the mystery is easily solved—it is that there is no salvation possible under Law.

But our meditations in these articles are on the application of these lessons to those who *are* Christians, those who *have* left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea.

What secret, then, is it, that *we* need to discover, so that those failures which are due simply to our natural earthiness and muddiness may be answered by our Father after the manner in which he responded to Israel's murmurings in the wilderness of Mud?

The secret is, stay where the *Grace* of God puts you, resting in what *God* did for you and does (Exod. xix:14: "How I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself") and not making promises of what *we* will do (xix:8).

Of the great Gospel lesson given in this chapter, we will say nothing. We are not attempting an exposition of the whole book of Exodus. We are merely tracing their route through the wilderness, as showing steps in the Christian experience.

While we are floundering in the wilderness of Mud, are we forgotten of our God? By no means; yet He waits for our cry of want, so that we may recognize that He does indeed answer prayer—it was not a mere chance happening.

Their cry was a murmuring cry, yet He answers it unstintedly. He gives them both bread and flesh. "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I *may prove them*, whether they will walk in my law, or not." So we are *proved* by the blessings that are poured out upon us, as well as by the afflictions. Perhaps if we

would learn by these acts of God's favor and be drawn, thus, more closely to Him, we would not need the more severe way like the smitings that came upon them later in their history.

It is very peculiar, the way Paul applies the lesson of the manna in 2 Cor. viii:15. So different from the application in John vi. There we have the great, transcendent teaching of the Gospel—Christ, God's gift of bread for man. In 2 Cor. is a picture of the equality of the Father's dealing with His children.

When we are young we do not see this, we do not believe it, and we are inclined to say, "The way of the Lord is not equal" (Ezek. xviii:29). When we get old, and have had pass before our eyes the very diverse lots of the Lord's own—some rich, some poor, some high, some low, some in the enjoyment of every faculty, some with many faculties cut off, or limited, some with wide circles of friends, some very lonely, some with bereavement after bereavement, and some who have never had a taste of that deep sorrow—when we have seen this diversity, we can perceive how the dealings of our Father are far more even than our murmuring hearts give Him credit for. Some abound in one form of comfort, but lack in another. Some are fruitful in spiritual experiences, but lack the experience of God supplying temporal needs. Some are lonely, while others have every family comfort, yet also, with it, family afflictions.

Each man was to gather bread "according to his eating." If any attempted to accumulate, and lay by in store, it bred worms (Exod. xvi:18-20). This is what theological seminaries attempt—the vain idea that a man can in two or three years lay up a store of spiritual knowledge that will equip him for a lifetime's work in the ministry. What happens? It breeds worms. All these worms that eat out the heart of Christianity, that emasculate it, that evolve a Christianity without a Christ, and a Bible with the inspiration taken out of it, all were bred in theological institutions. No, Christ is God's *bread*. We should feed upon Him. To assimilate all in one day, or even in one epoch of our lives, is impossible. We can only *really* feed upon Him, as the trials of the wilderness have given us hunger. The need for the

time being met, we then assimilate it, use it, develop it in spiritual energy.

To feed upon bread, we do not need to be analytical chemists, Indeed, many a chemist might so correctly describe to us the whole process, from the rotting wheat in the manured earth, right up through the fermenting and leavening process, as to destroy our appetite. And yet that same chemist may be unable to knead and bake a loaf of bread, so appetizing, so nutritious and digestible as many an unlearned housewife can bake.

The manna was given to *eat*, not to discuss about, as Israel was inclined to do (Exod. xvi:15, 31) and as the learned doctors discuss today.

And God's bread was not of man's cultivation at all. It was "bread from heaven." It was not even *like* ordinary bread, for it was "a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground;" "it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey."

So with the true Bread from heaven. It is a *gift*, God's great gift. But just now learned, unbelieving rabbis are straining the Bible (and common sense, too) to demonstrate that Christianity is an *evolved* thing—something that the human mind has conceived and developed from previous cruder ideas.

God's bread is a very little thing in the rationalist's eyes, and to gather it up he has to stoop. There is a humbling of human pride, the acknowledgement of our necessity (repentance), and the acceptance of a gift (faith). But he that thus *appropriates* Christ, that thus *feeds* on Him, as bread, has eternal life, and as to his *final* salvation, Christ Himself guarantees it (John vi:51 and 54).

But the believer, the one who has eaten and has eternal life, in what manner does he continue to feed upon Him daily while wandering in this wilderness of Mud—that is to say, this wilderness that makes us conscious of our earthiness? We contemplate Him who came down to this earth, who became a man "and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient until death" (Phil. ii:8). We need to meditate much on

the four Gospels, and never permit ourselves to be deluded with the idea that the Epistles have made us superior to the need of the simple food of the Gospels.

The most enlightened and the most heavenly disciple cannot possibly be beyond the Master, and He spoke of Himself as living by communion with the Father, and passes it on to us, that even so we will live by feeding upon Him when He is absent from us, by sight, as the Father was unseen then by mortal eyes (John vi:57).

VII. Sin to Rephidim

“And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim. And there was no water for the people to drink” (Exod. xvii:1).

Two things of seeming contradiction are here purposely put together—this march and encampment was distinctly by the commandment of the Lord, and yet there was no water in that place!

How often the believer feels his faith almost shattered when, having taken some step, distinctly, as he believes, because led of the Lord, he finds himself confronted, as a consequence, with some great necessity, or some great difficulty! He is tempted then to believe that he was *not* led of the Lord. But if *that* was a mistake (he reasons), “Then I never can feel sure that I am divinely led.”

But let him not haste to such conclusions. Wait, cry to the Lord. Possibly the new difficulty is only in order to give us a new deliverance.

Such was the experience of the writer. We were in Zitacuaro, in the western part of Mexico, on the confines of the civilized railroad-connected, well populated part of Mexico. We were bent on going to a sparsely populated, uncivilized region on the coast, a painful horseback journey of many days, taking with us press, paper and all equipment. We were kept waiting in suspense; then the way in that direction was shut against us; then we were singularly impressed by this peculiar message: “Take the young child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young child’s life.” That this was a divinely given message was confirmed, later, by a letter from England which *should* have reached us at that time and place, but was lost in the mails, and subsequently repeated. The letter contained a gift for the work, and this same text of Scripture! Was it not a singular text to send to a missionary? Was it not a singular text to lay hold of our minds? Yet it was vivid in its

meaning. "The land of Israel," viewed in relation to the place we were then in, was the central part of Mexico, where resided the greater number of Mexican converts. And the other clause, we took to mean that the two men who had opposed us and caused our heroic resolution of going to the wild, waste places, and commencing all over again, were now non-combatant, which turned out to be the case. One of them left the country and the other sought an alliance with us.

So, believing we were called by the Holy Spirit to return where members of God's spiritual Israel could be found, we came again to the thickly populated parts. Having nothing more precise to guide as to particular locality, we came to the place most suitable for our health, Orizaba.

And then! just like Israel in Rephidim, there was no water! Resources all used up, inconveniences and hardships! With great difficulty finding a shelter at all. And during it all a spell of the most miserable, cold, rainy weather. But then, when depression had reached its limit, the rock was opened! From a most unusual and most unexpected source we received in one mail ninety dollars! In *our* circumstances it seemed really wealth. This supplied the pressing needs of new housekeeping and new furnishing in a new location. And then, just a few days after, we made the acquaintance of an American couple with whom we found the most perfect Christian fellowship we have ever found in all our long and varied experience. And their love to us never failed, never flagged, even when we left that "Rephidim" and wandered on in other parts of Spanish America. Like the water from that opened rock that followed Israel wherever they went, their sustaining love followed us in our travels, as long as they remained on earth.

We should add, to confirm the reality of the Lord's leading, that there we commenced the meeting, and the printing of Gospel literature, which we turned over to Eglon Harris, who continues it with much blessing to this day, vastly amplified from our feeble beginning.

Again we read of the people's murmuring, and again we read

of the Lord overlooking their murmurings and responding, not by chastisement, but by simply giving them, and in abundance, that which they asked for. They were not yet under Law.

“And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel” (Exod. xvii:4-6).

This is the rock of which Paul says, that they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ (1 Cor. x:4)!

So we conclude that that miraculously procured stream followed them in their journeys.

It was up the mountain side that Moses proceeded, with the shepherd’s rod in his hand. And there, away above them, he smote the rock, and the stream flowed down to the people below. They did not see the rock smitten, but they received the results of that opened rock.

The millions of Christians who have drunk of the spiritual rock did not see the smiting done. The elders, the apostles, saw it. They saw Him crucified, smitten, dying, buried, risen and ascending into glory. We receive the testimony of the elders as to how and when the Rock was smitten, but the life giving water we know from personal experience of its refreshment.

And this is what Rephidim means (according to Gesenius)—Refreshment, and he derives it from the root “Supports.” If “Refreshment” be the meaning, then the place got its name from the water that there gushed forth. If “Supports” is the meaning, then it was named in commemoration of the second incident connected with Rephidim: that of Moses being supported when in prayer, by Aaron and Hur.

Both of these incidents may be seen recorded by inscriptions on rocks situated in the passes from that wilderness into the wilder-

ness of Sinai. The inscriptions are very ancient; were unintelligible for centuries, but now have been deciphered. There is a figure of a man seated on a large stone, with his hands lifted up, with the inscription under it: "The prophet upon a hard, great stone prayeth unto God, Aaron and Hur sustaining his hands." And on another rock is found the inscription: "The hard rock satiates with water the people thirsting" (Impl. Bib. Dic.).

However, it is not the literal happening, but the spiritual interpretation that we are tracing. Therefore we will not pause over these interesting confirmations of Bible history.

"Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (Exod. xvii:8). Who is this Amalek, and what does he represent, who dares thus to attack Israel just when their faith has been mightily strengthened by this display of God's might and care?

Amalek was one of the tribes of the great nation of Edom, descendants of Esau (Gen. xxxvi:2, 12).

They were the result of the union in matrimony of a son of Abraham and a woman of Canaan—a union contrary to Abraham's faith (Gen. xxiv:3), and therefore a direct disobedience. Its spiritual equivalent today would be the union in religious work of a real believer with a disciple of a spurious Christianity. The result of such union has been always the formation of a kind of nominal Christians, which hates and persecutes believers in a supernatural Christianity (Gal. iv:29).

The Spanish translation of verse 16 is not only the true, literal translation, but also suggests its real spiritual meaning to us: "And he said, Because of the hand on the throne of Jehovah." This suggests that the hands of Moses, lifted up in prayer, had reached the throne of Jehovah, and therefore was there victory.

That the warfare will be perpetual is a separate clause. It suggests to us, what we find to be the fact, that there always will be, coming to oppose believers in a Living God who really answers prayer by opening streams in the desert, a great host of merely nominal Christians, who have become Christians by means of education or of sacraments, and whose ministry is one formed by human training, humanly endowed, humanly author-

ized—nothing of the supernatural about it. The tendency of their ministry is always to dishearten faith, to suggest doubt as to all that is supernatural in the Bible, to exalt intellect and to mock at real answers to prayer from a Living God to a believing heart.

Amalek is an implacable enemy and a subtle one. How can he be victoriously met? Only by the hand reaching up to the throne of Jehovah. This is an arduous work, and even a Moses needed the assistance of the priesthood.

VIII. Rephidim to Sinai

"In the third month when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount" (Ex. xix:1, 2).

They now reach the center of their wilderness life. Here took place that step that changed their official relationship with God, for here they were put under Law. Here was given the first direct—or, as we might term it, guaranteed—revelation of God's deeper purpose of sustaining His people in a relationship based on atonement; for here the Tabernacle was given.

There were seven special camping grounds before they reached Sinai; and there were seven notable camping grounds after they had left Sinai, up to the time when the wilderness history of trials merges into the Canaan history of conquest.

Thus, with the Christian's history, we have all had our "wilderness of Mud," and all have tasted the bitter waters of Marah, and all have fed upon the Manna.

But as Sinai we come into things more intricate, less obvious. The bread from heaven and the smitten rock convey lessons that all believers have profited by. But that all believers have observed and have received the illumination conveyed by the manner in which the law was given, and by the giving of the Tabernacle after the law had been broken, is doubtful. However, let us read it, and each one can apply it for himself.

"They encamped a long time at Sinai. They reached there just three months after their escape from Egypt, and they did not leave till the twentieth day of the second month of the second year" (Num. x:11).

This suggests to us that we all linger long in this kind of a wilderness, that the getting under law, and the discovery "that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell," is something not learned in a day. That the revelation of God's provision for this

utter incapacity of the flesh, symbolized in the sacrifice and priesthood of the Tabernacle, is also something the soul only gradually learns to appropriate.

The way in which the Law was given was very singular indeed. Paul alludes to it in Rom. v:20, as something that crept in stealthily, for the word he employs here (entered) is the same as that used in Gal. ii:4 when he speaks of false brethren who "came in privily" to spy out our liberty.

This is how it happened:

"And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto Him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

"These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

"And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all the words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, all that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord" (Ex. xix:3-8).

So it was distinctly put before them as a *proposition*, as a Covenant, rather than as an autocratic demand. An absolute ruler does not usually consult the people as to whether they will be pleased to accept his laws, or not.*

The opening words should have been sufficient to suggest to the people that they were well enough off as they were—unbound by

*For example, while we were in Guatemala the president, Cabrera, made many laws, about which he did not even consult the Legislature. He made the laws and he put them into immediate execution. The Congress was *required* to sign them, according to the Constitution. This is the despotic rule that we have heard some expounders of Daniel ii declare is God's ordination, and is so perfect and lovely.

any promises; for when God had taken them up as his people, they had been simply asked to *believe* a message (Ex. iv:31).

Had they not seen (as Jehovah reminds them) what He did to the Egyptians for their sake (Ex. xv), and how He had brought them to Himself as on eagles' wings, over all the seemingly impossible path? Had they not experienced His grace again and again in overlooking their murmurings and in giving them bread from heaven and water from the flinty rock?

As they had, up to this time, been so disobedient and so unbelieving, was it not a rash thing to do to enter into a covenant based, no longer on what *God* had done (Ex. xix:4), but on what *they* intended to do? If they had found it to be a difficult thing to comply with the little they already knew of God's ways (Ex. xvi:26-28), how rash it was to thus pledge themselves to a covenant based wholly upon their obedience to *whatever* God might enjoin!

But thus is the Church today. The great, the very great, the overwhelming majority of Christians do not perceive that Christianity forbids any vowing—any religious promises made to God. Of old it was said, “Thou shalt nor forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths,” so the command, “Swear not at all,” means make no vows to the Lord (Matt. v:33). Yet nearly every denomination has its members subscribe to a “church covenant” and has its “ordination vows,” and many other vows!

And Israel vowed. Israel agreed to put their relationship with God on the basis of their promised perfect obedience.

“And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.” Notice this, for an absolute sovereign does not consult the people to ask them if they are disposed to do what he requires of them. But this Sovereign, this Almighty ruler, waits for their answer, their consent. Clearly, therefore, the Covenant of Law was *offered* to them as a proposition, which they might have humbly and reverently declined.

See the immediate change! In the very next verse He who had just before rejoiced in having brought them on eagles' wings near to Himself, now says, “Lo, I come unto thee in a *thick cloud*,” and, a little farther on, “Set bounds unto the people round about,

saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death" (Ex. xix:12).

Behold, what a change! Terror to rule, instead of faith! Distance instead of nearness!

But this is a large subject, and we must put the brakes on our pen. We must remember that we are not expounding the whole book of Exodus, but simply following Israel from camping place to camping place.

Yet we have to notice the distinctive happenings of each encampment; and these are the things of Sinai.

Who does not know that the Law was given at Sinai? The Law and Mount Sinai are associated terms in all the civilized world.

But something else took place at Sinai, too, and equal, or more, space is given to it, than is given to the Law, yet only the few notice it. Only the few drink of the wonderful, the soul-satisfying and soul-ravishing fountain of grace revealed thus.

At Sinai the sin-purging and atoning sacrifices were instituted. At Sinai the intercessory priesthood was established. At Sinai the wonderful House of God was constructed.

But it is not exactly that that conveys the lesson we refer to, but the *time*, the circumstances, the acute *crisis* in which the Tabernacle was given.

It was *after* the Law was given—and *broken!* It was *then*, when this covenant of perfect obedience, upon which was to be based their hope of being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, was flagrantly, absolutely, hopelessly broken by their wholesale and deliberate idolatry—it was then that the Tabernacle was made (compare Exod. xxxii:1 and xxxiv:1 with Deut. x:1-5 and Exod. xxxvi:1).

And this is generally the Christian's experience. Our conversion may be ever so sincere, yet we do not learn what the flesh is all in a moment. We are apt to think that, having renounced the fruit of the flesh—or some of the worst of it, the only fruits that had troubled our conscience—we have annulled the root

also. And when we have discovered that the flesh has *many* fruits, and that some of these the world actually admires and cultivates, we are tempted to hope that cultivation will improve the tree itself.

All do not pass through the same experience, or more correctly, there are many roads by which we finally arrive at the profound conviction as to ourselves that Paul had when he wrote, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell."

And then when we have become convinced—not as a theological tenet as to human nature in general, but as a painful discovery as to our own nature—that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be, then what a fountain of renewal and of hope do we find in the provision that God made in the Tabernacle! Or rather, in our case, in that of which the Tabernacle was so exactly a figure—a sacrifice that secures a once-for-all redemption, a Priest who ever lives to intercede, a perpetual Presence that will abide with us to the end. All this is based, not on a covenant of Law, but given freely as a prerogative of sovereign grace.

Israel had been guilty of high-treason. God would have been justified, legally, if He had cast them off, once and for all, but—He reasons, in response to Moses' intercession—I am Sovereign, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy (Exod. xxxiii:19).

In the closing exhortations of that book which reveal to us the spiritual meaning of the Tabernacle, the Holy Spirit says, Ye (believers in the Lord Jesus) have not come unto the mount that it was death to touch, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest (Heb. xii:18).

How strange that so many who consider themselves Christians prefer to live in the shadow of Mount Sinai; prefer to believe that they are, at any moment, in danger of eternal damnation!

Not to Sinai, but to Mount Sion have we come. Mount Sion was a place sanctified by the wonderful act of grace where the destroying angel sheathed his sword because of the atoning sacrifice (1 Chron. xxi:26, 27) and which became the site of the Temple

that took the place of the Tabernacle (1 Chron. xxii:1). On Sion, not on Sinai, is the Church built.

And we have come to the city of the living God, to the company of angels, to the church of the first-born, and to other objects of grace and glory which he names. All this is in contrast to the "mount that might be touched," that is to say, the covenant that could so easily be broken, and to break which had such fatal results. *Ye have come*, he says, to Jesus, the Mediator of the *New covenant*, a covenant as He Himself told us, in His blood shed for the remission of sins.

In the last chapter of the epistle it is called an *eternal covenant*, for it is based on the perfect atonement that he has made, and on our works. Yea, He Himself *was raised from the dead in virtue of the blood of that covenant!* Did you ever think of that, reader? Do you understand it?

Well, it is this way: *He died on the cross for our sins. He sank into the grave under our load. Now if that blood has not been efficacious to put away the sins which sunk Him into the grave, on what ground, for what just reason, could Supreme Right have raised Him from the dead?*

Where are we, reader—you and I? In the wilderness of Sinai making vows and promises, and living in dread that we may happen to touch the mount which burns with fire? Is the God that we know enveloped in a thick cloud? Is His voice so terrifying to us that we think the less we know of His will the better for us? Or, have we come to the mount that has no bounds around it, to which we have been brought by the blood of an altogether different kind of covenant? Do we belong to the city of the Living God, whose life sustains all those who have put their trust in Him? (John xiv:19). Are we now children of the heavenly Jerusalem? (Gal. iv:26).

In Galatians iv Paul opens to us a great mystery, that of the two Jerusalems. There is an earthly Jerusalem which is identified with mount Sinai, and all her children are in bondage, for they are under law. And there is a heavenly Jerusalem, and all her children are free (2 Cor. iii:17), for they have an eternal salvation.

These descriptions are not dispensational; they are real, they are actual, they are experimental.

Just as in the apostle's day there was an earthly Israel which clung to Law, and was in bondage (Gal. iv:25), and was a persecutor of the real spiritual Israel (Gal. iv:29), just so today, there is a great, ostentatious, earthly Church, under Law, in bondage with her children, whose religion consists of laws, organizations stipulations, vows and rules; and there are scattered believers, whose unity is not gained by organizations, nor by federations, but by really having one mind as to fundamental truths, one Person who is the supreme object of their faith—which faith is not only a creed, but is a heart-trust in His blood, a spiritual intelligence, a real illumination as to the Word being God-breathed, and a hope that is not hoping for world improvements, but for a heavenly city that is coming down from the glory with the King of Glory.

Now, I do just wonder where we are in our Wilderness pilgrimage? That we are all believers, I can safely presume. But some, perhaps, have just left Egypt, and to others all we can say may seem stale. Some, perhaps, have just reached Sinai, and are trembling under its thick cloud, like Israel at that crisis (Ex. xix:16). Other have emerged from the cloud, have learned by actual experience that it is in vain that the flesh vows and promises; it is a traitor to its own master, even. They have rejoiced in the later revelation made at Sinai of a sin offering, and of a priest who intercedes, and of a place where they can worship. So that in their future wilderness wanderings they will always have the Tabernacle with them; always have that preserving Presence (Ex. xxxiii:14): always, in spite of failures, be worshippers.

IX. Kibroth-hattaavah

The history, as told in Exodus, ends with the giving of the Law at Sinai, followed by the institution of a new thing—a systematized religion, or sacred apparatus, as it is called in Heb. ix:1*—by which provision is made so that Israel may walk with God, and God may walk with Israel (Lev. xxvi:11, 12), even when the Law has brought out the inability of the flesh to keep the commandments of God. The last thirteen chapters of Exodus, and nearly the whole of Leviticus, are taken up with the construction of and the worship in connection with the Tabernacle—the ordinances in which is symbolized the way whereby a sinful man can gain access to God, and in which God can still get along with a sinful man. To resume the history of Israel's wanderings we have to pass on to Numbers.

Here, too, the Tabernacle occupies much space. The first ten chapters are almost entirely about it. In view of the preponderating space given to the religion of the Tabernacle—about fifty chapters, whereas the Law is told in about five chapters—is it not strange that while the millions upon millions of even merely nominal Christians all know something of the Ten Commandments, very few indeed know anything of the gracious provision of the Tabernacle? The majority do not know even that there was a Tabernacle! Far less do they have any idea of what it represents. There must be a something in the human heart (is it the consciousness of sin?) that can grasp the idea of justice and punishment, but cannot grasp an idea so foreign to the carnal nature as grace. For we see the same disposition as regards New Testament things—who has not heard of some of the moral precepts given in Christ's teachings? But how few know the Gospel of redemption and a new creation in Christ, as brought out in the writings of the apostles!

*More literally, "Holy Universe," a miniature representation of God's universe; for His universe is not simply physical, it is also moral: there is a Without and a Within, whose bounds cannot be passed (Luke xvi:26); and a Nearness and a Far-off-ness (Eph. ii:13): an Elysium and an Abyss (Rev. iv:3; ix:1).

And thus with Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. Our minds have been more impressed with the record of their chastisements, than they have been with the many and varied provisions of God's grace. For example, when the history of their peregrination is resumed in Numbers, see how much space is given to the arrangements made for the service of the Tabernacle, and the order of their march! See how very minutely is described the provision for guidance, given in the cloud of the Lord's presence! (Numbers is:15-23).

"And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the Tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys (rather, 'set forward by their divisions,' i. e., camp by camp) out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran."

First, marched three tribes, Judah taking the lead. With these went the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, bearing the structural equipment of the Tabernacle. Then came three more tribes, and with them the sons of Kohath, bearing the ark and other vessels of the sanctuary. Then the other six tribes.

Then the narrative is interrupted to tell us how Hobab, brother of Moses' wife, was with them (for they were now in the region where his tribe roamed) and how Moses, wishing to retain him, suggests to him that he could be their guide as to where they should encamp: "forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." Now that, to guide to the camping places, was precisely what the cloud was for—as described so minutely in the previous chapter. So the following verse, with the change from the order previously given—making the ark now go first—may be taken as a rebuke to the fleshly wisdom of Moses' suggestion. No doubt Hobab was perfectly familiar with all the region they were now passing through. But God, in His guidance of us, has other objects besides the simple matter of where our needs would be best supplied. Sometimes He guides to a barren place on purpose to test us.

So, immediately, we have this change of the ark's place in the

march: not in the center of the column (as in verse 21), but leading the column. "And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the Lord was upon (or over) them by day, when they went out of the camp (or broke up camp). And it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel" (Num. x:33-36).

Moses was sustained throughout his arduous task by faith in the Lord's presence with them—"Rise up, Lord, let thine enemies be scattered." If they attempt to obstruct Israel's path, Almighty power shall scatter them, for Israel's path is God's path. Guided by Him to another camping ground, Moses then invokes His wonted presence in spreading the sheltering canopy of the cloud over all of them.

Can *we* use Moses' language? If we are in the right path, then our enemies are God's enemies. We can say to every mountain of difficulty that hinders us, Let God arise, and let *His* enemies be scattered.

But we hold that whether we have a right thus to invoke His power, depends upon whether we have really taken Hobab for our guide in our path, or whether we are trusting our God to do this for us.

In Moses' case God took action to prevent Hobab being their guide. But He may not always do this. He may, in some cases, let us have our way.

We suppose that Hobab went with them, and may have been a guide in minor details, for we find his descendants many years after, associated with the tribe of Judah (Judges i:16).

Now we come to the first case of murmuring *after* the Law was given. It is promptly answered by chastisements. This peculiarity cannot be accidental. Israel murmured five times *before* the Law was given. In no instance was there chastisement, nor even

scolding. There are five instances, too, of their murmuring *after* the Law was given. Each time they were promptly and severely chastised. Then, at the eleventh murmur, God has to show them what the priesthood meant, and how thus, by means of the provision made in the ordinances of the Tabernacle, a people with Law for their constitution, could yet be dealt with in grace. This we must explain more fully when we reach that chapter.

“And the people became like men complaining of evil in the ears of the Lord (thus the margin of our Bible reads); and the Lord heard and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and consumed them that were in the extremity of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses: and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah (burning), because the fire of the Lord burnt among them” (Num. xi:3).

So we see that the truth of “Our God is a consuming fire” may be applied to chastisements amongst the Lord’s own people.

Taberah was simply a part of the encampment—the extremity of it. The name given in the last verse of this chapter covers the whole encampment. The further and larger example of murmuring narrated in the following verses occurred at the same place.

“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”

This casual word about the mixed multitude may explain all the most serious cases of rebellion against God. Perhaps in the sudden, midnight rush out of Egypt, it could not well be avoided that “a mixed multitude went up also with them” (Ex. xii:38). Thus also in Christianity. In the joy of the preaching of Christ’s glorious salvation, free to all who would accept it, we cannot wonder that amongst the tens of thousands of believers, there were also many whose hearts had never been awakened as to their sin, and who thought that a mere assent to a creed was the same thing as the faith-grip of a drowning man. Thus it is in every work.

However it may have happened, once they are within, this mixed multitude, these people who are at heart unbelievers, can make lots of trouble. They must have diversions. Why! in some churches they have lusted for, and have gained, dances! In fact many "modern" churches have been built lately—and of orthodox denominations, too—which have theaters built into the building, making thus the lust of the flesh a deliberately and permanently allowed thing. Not always does the mixed multitude get the upper hand like this; but there is one thing about which the mixed multitude *always* grumble—they tire of the manna, they tire of the "bread from heaven," and cry for strong smelling food of Egypt. "Our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes."

They want something for the emotions, something more exciting than the story of the humbled and suffering Christ.

When the contagion had spread, so that almost the whole of Israel was weeping "throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent," it was too much for Moses. He breaks down and complains to Jehovah of the great burden he had to bear: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." And this is how it came to pass that seventy elders were chosen to assist him to bear the burden. So "organization," which modern churches claim is so necessary for efficiency was, at first, but a condescension to human weakness. It was thus also in the appointment of the first deacons. There was first a murmuring (Acts vi:1) and this discontent so increased the burden of the apostles that they perceived that if their time had to be spent in settling the petty grievances of the people, it would take them away from prayer and the ministry of the word—which, of course, was the devil's aim. So seven deacons were chosen.

The ideal condition is, no arrangement whatsoever, but absolute dependence upon God for supplies, and upon the Holy Spirit for guidance.

As old Dr. Maclean of the "Echoes" said to me, "you *must* have *some* arrangement; but the least you have of it the better."

Probably he had noticed this chapter and had seen that arrangements—or what today so many improperly and unfortunately call organization—came in, not as a pre-conceived divine plan, but as a *condescension* to feebleness of faith and patience. When we see that, we shall not glory in arrangements, even though sometimes constrained to use them.

It is interesting to know that this particular camping place was one of the best they had as yet found. At the present day it is a favorite place of the Arabs. Pasture for their flocks is abundant, and there are many springs in the vicinity. Water is abundant.

So what had Israel to grumble at? This is why the Lord was displeased with them. They were complaining as though they were suffering some positive evil. But they had food, they had water, they had pasture for their flocks. But when our hearts are in a grumbling condition, we manage to find some defect, or lack, about which to complain. No wonder the wise man said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." They wanted Egyptian food, they are tired of pilgrimage. They want the *world's* things. Is it ever so with us?

The manna was a *gift* of God. Israel had neither to plow, nor to sow it, nor cultivate it, nor harvest it. They simply had to gather it up and prepare it. Yet they chose to ignore all this immense saving of toil and patience, and chose to concentrate their thought upon what they had *not*. It is to bring this out, that the narrative here repeats from Exodus some things about the manna, calling attention to the simplicity of it all: "When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it." The people merely had to collect it, and cook it to suit their taste. What a saving of long toil in the heat of the sun, and months of waiting for the wheat to ripen! But they chose to forget the toil and sweating and hard bondage of Egypt, and to remember only the garlic and the flesh meat.

God gratifies their desire, and in such an abundance that it becomes a judgment on them. He caused a wind to blow that brought them quails from the sea, flying about two cubits (3 to

4 feet) above the level of the ground. So the people could easily catch them on the wing. They stuck to this work for thirty-six hours continuously (verse 32). What a strain, what a toil, compared to the simple gathering of the manna in the cool hours of the morning (verse 9).

They caught vast quantities of quail, and spread them out to dry in the sun, just as we have seen great slices of beef laid out in all parts of Spanish America. On the coast of Peru vast quantities of small fish are dried and preserved in this manner.

To the Philippians Paul said, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." The manna is a good and safe food. Israel had proved that it could sustain them in health. Why lust for stimulating, nerve-irritating food? The customs and tastes acquired in Egypt still survived in their souls. We could call it "the old Nature." We can hardly blame them for *having* these results of their earlier condition. But, could they not have *denied* these old tastes? Could they not have said, we have seen so much of God's kindness towards us, and so many proofs that He does not lack power to do aught that is for our good, that we are persuaded that if he does not *always* give us flesh to eat (for He did it occasionally) (Ex. xvi:13), it is because He sees that in this quiet life of the wilderness we require very little "strong meat."

But the lust for novelties often overcomes all our spiritual reasonings, and we grieve the Spirit by listening to the demands of the flesh. Thus we force the Lord to deal with us just as a wise parent, unwillingly, but in faithful love, has to chastise his child. The chastisement in Israel's case was markedly connected with the gratification of their desire, for it says: "While the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah ('graves of lust,' or, desire): because there they buried the people that lusted."

To this day there are many burying places in that region; some

of them so ancient, that the Arabs do not know, even by tradition, whose graves they are.*

*“It must be something more than a coincidence that the Arab cemeteries in the tract of country now under consideration exceed in number those of every other part of the peninsula. It is as though the inhabitants were attracted by some mysterious sympathy towards that scene of fearful mortality, the remembrance of which would long survive in the traditions of their forefathers But strange to say, there are two more places of sepulture as the traveller proceeds a few miles southward, and yet more strange, both of them are in Wady Berah (the probable site of Israel's camp). At its northern extremity . . . is a small Arab cemetery, and not far from its junction with Wady Soleif (valley of the quails) is to be seen an old cemetery, apparently no longer used by the Arabs. The heaps of stones which mark the graves are larger than usual, and our guides refer them back to the times of the Franks, as the Bedouin do everything of which they know nothing themselves. We shall not greatly err in the belief that this ancient and unused graveyard, whose history is unknown to the modern Arab, even as its appearance bespeaks a higher civilization than theirs, contains the veritable dust of those who provoked the Lord to wrath as Kibroth-hattaavah; while it is possible that the smaller cemetery at the opposite termination of Wady Berah is a memorial of the unhappy men who fell in the judgment of Taberah. This latter event, although occurring, it would seem, at the same encampment as the former, is yet represented as a distinct transaction” (Deut. ix:22), (Impl. Bib. Dic. iv:27).

X. Ki broth-Hattaavah to Hazeroth

“And the people journeyed from Ki broth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth. And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it” (Num. xi:35; xii:1, 2).

This is a very discouraging incident—but yet a comforting one; discouraging, that the very leaders should fall out. Comforting to us, for we are very likely to be stumbled when we see the same things occurring today.

As Miriam’s name is put before Aaron’s, we can see that she had a recognized place as a prophetess. Some will say in their minds, “Yes, and see what comes of letting a woman take a leading place!” But such forget that the man, Aaron, had failed long before the woman, Miriam, did, for it was he who made the golden calf for Israel.

It is most distressing when the leaders in some spiritual movement complain against one another. The professed reason here is, that Moses, in their opinion, took too much on himself. The real cause of the complaint, the Spirit reveals, was jealousy because his wife was not of the race of Israel. But she was not a Canaanite, and she was the wife God had given him, and the woman who had shared his previous rejection and loneliness (Ex. ii:21). This fact ought to have inspired Miriam with grace to overlook any customs she had which differed from Miriam’s code of what was proper.

How often the Church has been divided by the jealousies of leaders! And how often the spiritual pride and ambition for leadership is on the accusing side, and not on the side of the one whom God has been using! (verse 3). And how often, again, the real underlying cause, is some petty, personal dislike that is never put forward!

The saints are stumbled by these things. Some even give up the truth, and turn aside from the pilgrim path. But these things are written for our comfort, so that if even the leaders do such

things we should not be surprised for we see that it has all happened before, and we know that it is written, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. They are but men. God chose to use them. But they are flesh and blood, and have just as much need to watch and pray, as the soul that was converted but yesterday.

The Lord rebukes Miriam by smiting her with leprosy. Does Moses then say, "Hallelujah!" God has vindicated me! He does not, He sorrows for his sister and prays for her, and through his intercession she is healed.

And then the Lord honored poor Miriam again by forcing Israel to recognize their need of the prophetess's ministrations: "And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days; and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again." Thus they were made to feel and to recognize that she was one body with them, and they could not do without her.

XI. Hazereth to Kadesh-Barnea, in Paran

In Numbers we are simply told that when they left Hazereth, they pitched in the wilderness of Paran—without naming the precise place of their encampment, but in Deut. i:19 it is given, with many details that explain the incidents recorded in Numbers xiii.

“And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us, and we came to Kadesh-barnea. And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

“And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come” (Deut. i:19-22).

This makes it perfectly clear that the path of faith would have been, to go straight ahead, confident that the Lord would both guide them, and also give them victory. Moses seeks to inspire them with his faith by assuring them that the mountain in front was to be regarded, not as a difficulty, but as the mountain-land “which the Lord our God doth give unto us.” And he does not suggest any need of spies at all, but cheers them on to “Go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee, fear not, neither be discouraged.”

But unbelief had gained an entrance into their hearts, and they invent an excuse for delay. We will send spies, they say. Notice, they did not supplicate. “*Let us,*” they said, “*We will.*”

Moses therefore, seeing that the whole people were possessed with the idea—“ye came near every one of you,” he says—allows them to have their way, and simply regulates what their wills were so strongly set on doing.

A similar thing may happen in God’s dealings with us. Our

faith may fail, and we look around for something that *seems* to combine worldly prudence with faith. We do not, at first, *refuse* to take the step of faith so obviously in front of us, we simply are taking precautions to make ourselves safe. But faith accepts risks, counts upon God to confront the risks.

The fact that "every one of you" willed to send spies, and that the spies, when sent, represented the whole of Israel (Num. xiii:2) suggests to us, that the professing Church as a whole, refused to go on and take up the heavenly calling that was theirs (Eph. i:18) and should have been their testimony, when the reign of demons over the conscience of humanity (1 Cor. x:20) seemed drawing to a close.

And here we have to inquire, What does the conquest of Canaan represent to us?

The idea that Jordan means death and Canaan means heaven has so taken possession of the Christian mind that it seems impossible to the majority to see anything higher.

We should like to ask them, "Shall we, could we, send spies into heaven, to see whether it is a good land or a bad, and what is the road by which to get there?"

[The truth is that the idea of death being a river is borrowed from the pagans. They had their river Styx, so when the Church got paganized it adopted the idea, and called it Jordan.]

What Jordan means to us, we must leave till we reach the end of Israel's wilderness. At present, it is enough to say, in a general way, that in the passing out of the wilderness of passive trials into the land of active combat, we have a picture of the Church taking up its heavenly calling and, as a direct and inevitable consequence, having to conquer those evil spirits who have usurped that position in the consciences of men.

That the spies were sent in the beginning of the second year, manifests that the journey from Egypt to Canaan was not such a very long one—it took them one year and three months to reach Kadesh (Num. x:11 28th Deut. i:2)—and, taken spiritually, it shows us that if we would give ourselves with goodwill to the wars of the Lord we would escape many of the wearing desert experiences.

We have known many Christians whose experience is entirely a wilderness one, for the very simple reason that they do not choose to face the question of entering into combat for the heavenly position.

This business of sending spies always results in undermining the courage of those who should have gone right on.

It is as though a company of souls recently converted and called out of Egypt, having passed through various experiences of knowing Christ as the Bread from heaven and the Rock smitten for them, should have put before them God's purposes in having saved them, as He has explained in the letters given by the Holy Spirit to the seven Churches (Rom., Cor., Gal., Eph., Phil., Col., Thess.), exactly what is the Testimony of the Church—that she has to represent God in this world; she meddles not in politics, but witnesses to another heavenly and perfect world.

But suppose that instead of gladly taking up this heavenly testimony, she picks out twelve of the most intellectual men and commissions them to study up history and philosophy and find out whether "it pays" to adopt such a strange, such an unearthly mode of life. Has anybody else ever attempted it? And if so, what has been the result?

What kind of information would they bring back? Undoubtedly their report would be like that of the ten spies. They would say, Yes, it is very true that Paul, in the Ephesians, says that the Church is absolutely a heavenly people, that, in Christ, they are already seated in heavenly places, and that He, the Head, has promised all manner of spiritual endowments—but, but! there are giants! The first Christians very thoroughly took up the heavenly position. And see what happened to them!—they were all beheaded! But, afterwards, when the Church agreed to satisfy to some extent the tastes of the world, she became rich and popular, and acquired influence over all the nations of the civilized world. And though they did not thus become saved from the wrath to come, they ceased to be savages and became amenable to civilization.

Likewise in recent times, all those who have entered into

“Canaan,” while they can show samples of wonderful fruit-bearing, have experienced no end of troubles, contempt and poverty, as though the devil had taken a special dislike to them.

And the result would be as before—here and there a Caleb or a Joshua who says, “We *are* able, through God,” but their voices are drowned by the voices of the majority, and the popular vote decides that better are the privations we suffer as wilderness Christians than any fanatical, visionary schemes of dispossessing these spiritual giants from the dominion they have enjoyed for ages.

And poor Caleb and Joshua have to go back with the rest! The individual *cannot* give the testimony that it is the place of the united company to give.

And, in truth, there *are* giants. So, which path will we choose? —the most easy one of remaining in the desert, or the difficult one of grasping in our souls God’s purposes for the Church, and boldly attacking every giant that opposes us?

Caleb and Joshua will answer for us and say, “Though weapons of our warfare are not carnal, they are mighty, nevertheless—through God—to the pulling down of strongholds that Satan has builded; casting down reasonings and every high fortification that he has raised up against the spread of the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. x:5).

In the description of the journey of the spies there is a very significant remark that we are accustomed to overlook. It says, they ascended by the south country and came unto Hebron. And then, in parenthesis, remarks, “Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt” (Num. xiii:22).

Zoan was a very ancient, and flourishing town of commerce, still a flourishing place when Christianity commenced. Now there is scarcely a trace left. Zoan seems to have been, for a time, a residence of the Pharoahs, for it was in the plains before Zoan that some of God’s mighty acts, through Moses, were done Psl. lxxviii:12).

But ancient as was this center of Egypt, Hebron was before it. Hebron was the dwelling place of the man of faith, Abraham (Gen. xiii:18). It was the place of fellowship with God, for there the Lord appeared to him several times and there God called him his friend.

The suggestion, the very encouraging suggestion to us is—before ever Satan got his present hold of man's conscience—man was in communion with God. Man's present condition is *not* his normal condition. The spirit that rules in the children of disobedience is a usurper. The lost piece of silver the Holy Spirit is sweeping up things to find (Luke xv:8) still has God's image and superscription (Luke xx:24, 25). We but seek to return it to its rightful owner. Or, to apply it more strictly to the matter before us—the Church was originally the dwelling place of God the Spirit (1 Cor. iii:17), where He could freely make known His mind, and foretell things they needed to know (Acts xi:28). If Satan's ministers now occupy all the high places, they have no right there. If, then, we seek to revive the testimony of the Church's heavenly calling, we are not making a war of invasion and conquest. We are, rather, but ousting those who never had a right to find any access into that holy dwelling.

XII. Kadesh-Barnea to Wilderness of Zin

"Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there" (Num. xx:1).

In matters of geography we accept the conclusions arrived at by the Imp. Bib. Dic. So we understand that when Israel came to Kadesh the first time they were moving through the wilderness of Paran. They then departed and wandered in the wilderness of Zin, and encamped in Kadesh a second time, Kadesh being on the border of each of these wild, hilly regions. For "wilderness" in Scripture never means a level plain, but always a mountainous, uncultivated region.

This *second* encampment at Kadesh is marked by occurrences of an exactly opposite nature to those occurring during their first encampment there.

Then, it was the scene of rebellions and of chastisement. Now it is the scene of one of, or perhaps we ought to say, the most pronounced type of the action of pure grace in all the Old Testament.

In chapter xvii we have a curious episode about choosing a rod; one rod for each tribe, and then God choosing from the twelve the rod that should bring forth leaf, bud and fruit. We call it curious because at the time no practical use was shown for it. The only rod that bore fruit was that of Aaron, the high priest. God accepts it, and says: "Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not" (Num. xvii:10).

If we accept the Septuagint version we might, instead of "a token *against* the rebels," read, "a token *to* the deaf," which really seems more in harmony with the use to which the rod was to be put, namely, to "make to cease from me the murmurings" (verse 5).

It seemed a strange way of taking away their murmurings, and stranger still when we find that at this new encampment they

murmured just as they had done before! But *then* it comes out what this fruit-bearing rod was for, and in what sense their murmurings were to be made to cease.

“And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! . . . And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him” (Num. xx:2-9).

This last verse shows us that the rod to be used was this identical fruit-bearing rod, representing the priestly intercession, for that had been laid up before the Lord in the holy of holies.

Israel had not ceased to murmur, for this is one of the very worst examples of their murmurings; but God had not said that their murmurings would cease, but “I will make to cease *from Me* the murmurings.” In this chapter we find how the rod was to be used. Not only did God not now chastise them—He went far beyond that, in His grace. He gave them, in abundance, that which they needed, without even a scolding word, because Moses stood there with the fruit-bearing rod in his hand.

Most people when they read this chapter fix their attention upon the smaller incident of Moses’ failure here, and fail to perceive the meaning of the greater incident of God’s magnificent grace, in responding, not according to what *they* deserved, but according to what *He* deserved who bore perfect fruit. Of course to Israel the rod could have been but a figure of Aaron’s priestly intercession, but we are called upon to recognize in it a type of our Lord Jesus, who as man bore perfect and perennial fruit, and who now intercedes for us at the right hand of power.

"And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their *beasts* also."

It is interesting to know that the Hebrew word for rock in Exod. xvii:6, where Moses did well to smite the rock, means "pressed" or "cut"; while here the word used means "elevated," as in Isa, xxxviii:16.

On the cross our Lord was the smitten Rock, smitten that waters of eternal life might flow forth for man. But now He is the High Rock, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and never needing to be smitten again, but simply spoken to, so that He may supply all that His followers need; and supply it even when they do not deserve it. But there are these conditions: (1) Speak to the Rock; (2) Have the rod of Christ's intercession in your hand.

Christians commonly miss these two things. The great majority confuse Christ's intercession with his mediatorship. As Mediator on the Cross, He was a Ransom for all mankind (1 Tim. ii:6). As Intercessor, at the right hand of power, He secures help for those who have accepted his leadership (Heb. iv:16).

And others who *do* see the Gospel, and believe that the smitten Rock was smitten once for all, are apt to take all the rest for granted. That is, ignore the exercise of soul, ignore the necessity of an actual faith for these further blessings. Just as there had to be an actual, specific act of faith when they received salvation, so it is all through our pilgrimage: "The just shall *live* by faith."

It is very possible to make the grand text, "All things work together for good to them that love God," an excuse for spiritual laziness. Refusing to be stirred up to soul-searching, and to the putting away of all things that may hinder the grip of faith. The Lord's people miss many a happy solution of wilderness trials. Such will answer us. Well, *Don't* you believe that all things will work together for good to them that love God? And we can

but reply, Assuredly, but the “all things” may include a continued drought, more thorns, more chastisements, which ye might have escaped, if ye had laid things to heart and had stirred yourselves up to go and speak to the Rock, and, in faith, had *expected* the waters to come forth.

Did you notice the word “and their beasts also”? Our “beasts” are whatever carried us along. To Israel, it meant, literally, their cattle. To believers today it may mean their business, to a missionary it may mean the money needed to take him across the seas, or to travel when there, or get a preaching place. God is willing to give us, not only that which is necessary for our salvation, but also all that may be needed for every emergency of the present life (1 Tim. iv:8).

Moses, for once, failed to grasp God’s meaning. He failed to perceive that God now did not want to consider them as rebels, but simply as poor, needy men and women for whom Aaron was daily interceding. Moses had not only *smitten* the rock, contrary to orders, but had also called them “rebels.”

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to *sanctify me* in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” So it is a very serious matter to *dim the lustre of God’s grace*. How many servants of the Lord may have been guilty of this we never can know till we meet them in glory and they tell us with their own lips. But we do know this, that in *every fresh discovery of some long over-looked privilege provided for by grace* and only waiting for faith to grasp it, there have been servants of God who are prejudiced against it, and who discourage the faith of God’s children.

“Because ye believed me not, to *sanctify me* in the eyes of the children of Israel. . . . This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and *He was sanctified in them.*”

Ponder this, dear reader, and you will get a *higher standard of sanctification* than what is current among Christians generally. Moses, a mere messenger of God, is called upon to “*sanctify*”

God! What can it mean? It certainly cannot mean "make God more holy." We can see but one meaning to it: Moses should have so literally carried out the Lord's instructions that God would have been held up before the people, *demonstrated to be a God of infinite grace, separated, distinct from all the mean and harsh ideas of God the heathen had.* At Sinai they had been impressed by His claims for righteousness. They should now—now after the wilderness trials had fully proved their continual tendency to murmur and to strive against God—be impressed by His grace; they should now have a vivid picture of how kind He was, how forgiving, how generous, how far above the petty ideas they had formed of Him, always measuring Him by themselves.

It is as though He just longed to let out something of that love which could not plainly be declared till Christ should have come and have made the great expiation for sin. It was a grand opportunity for Moses, for the people had just then been murmuring exceeding badly—actually wishing they were dead! And God, in his response, had not a word of scolding for them! Standing before that rock with the rod in his hand, covered with beautiful white blossoms, and just *asking* the rock for water, the people would see in it that Aaron's intercession had real power with God, and God thus glorified before their eyes as a God of *Grace*, would be separated, lifted up, high, far, far above the mean ideas of Him they had hitherto held.

But Moses failed to understand this. He spoilt it all by calling them "rebels." But were they not rebels? That is not the point. The point, the lesson Moses was to teach was, that God was not now treating them as rebels. Just so today, there are preachers who, even when they are addressing a congregation of Christians gathered expressly as Christians, and gathered to worship, persist in calling them "sinners." And when we protest and say that God calls them "saints" (Col. 1:2) and deals with them in grace, as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," they reply, Don't they ever sin; and is not a man that sins a sinner? So they refuse to take notice of the fact that in all the epistles addressed to the churches the official name given to sinners who have believed is saints, and

never sinners. When a woman gets married the law ceases to recognize her maiden name. It henceforth recognizes her by the name of the man to whom she has become united. We cease to be considered officially as sinners. The Spirit has christened us with a name formed from "Christ." At Antioch, where Gentiles were amalgamated with Jewish believers as one Church (body), they were divinely directed (for that is the real meaning of the word translated "called" in Acts xi:26) to adopt the name of Christians.

"There is a sin unto death" John says. "I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John v:16). Some people think he means damnation. Others, perceiving that John is only writing about believers—for he uses the word "brother" in this passage—and know that the Lord's sheep can never perish, think the sin unto death must be some particularly heinous sin. But with this case of Moses before us, we come to a very different conclusion.

The sin that was the cause of six hundred thousand men of Israel dying in the wilderness, was the sin of unbelief as to God's real presence with them, ensuring victory over their enemies, "so we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." And the "sin unto death" of Moses was unbelief that God could treat His people so completely on the ground of Grace, "Because ye believed Me not . . . therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num. xx:12).

"And Miriam died there (Kadesh) and was buried there." As she was ten or twelve years older than Moses (Exod. ii:7) we cannot say her death was premature. She had murmured; she had been chastised with a light chastisement; she had been restored. God had honored her by ranking her as a co-deliverer of His people with Moses and Aaron. "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam" (Micah vi:4). She is spoken of as a prophetess, and we infer from Exod. xv that she was a composer of hymns. How much we all may be indebted to hymns as the inspirers of hope and confidence we do not realize.

But the chief thought that impresses us about this brief mention of Miriam is, that Kadesh is the place where *jealousies and murmurings die*. There, at their first sojourn, the spirit of murmuring was so fully manifested, and there, at their second sojourn, the Lord's great cure for murmuring was manifested. It was THE ROD, not a rod to smite *them*, but a rod by which to speak to the Rock.

To perceive the grace of God; to use the grace of God; to experience the grace of our God in supplying all our needs, not according to our deserts, but for *His* sake who said, "If ye shall ask anything IN MY NAME I will do it."

XIII. Kadesh-Barnea to Mount Hor

"And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadish, and came unto mount Hor" (Num. xx:22).

Mount Hor became memorable as the burial place of Aaron. The reason of his death was seen in our last article about Kadesh. He was conjointly guilty, with Moses, of failing to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of Israel. Moses did the smiting of the rock, but it was Aaron's rod with which it was done. Moses' was the active part, but Aaron, though passive, was responsible also.

"Aaron shall be gathered unto his people . . . because ye rebelled against my word at the waters of Meribah."

No disease is given as the cause of his death. Sufficient it is to know the spiritual cause. Oh, that Christians today would stop talking of things in the world's language, and would use the language of faith, looking above all lower things to God! Every branch in the True vine that beareth not fruit He (the Father) taketh away (John xv:2), because fruit bearing is the object of our sojourn on earth.

Aaron was "gathered unto his people." He went home to the rest enjoyed by Abraham and the other saints of God of that age. The believer now is, similarly, gathered to be with Christ. "My Father," Jesus says, "is the husbandman." So the removal of the branch is not the work of an angry Judge, but the loving hand of the Father. The "vine of the earth"—the spurious Christianity—is not pruned, it is left to the last for judgment (Rev. xiv:18-20; xix:15). The True vine is kept pruned.

But even these chastisements are really acts of kindness. For, see, Aaron has the joy of seeing his work continued by his son (Num. xxx:26). Besides, Aaron was now about 120 years old, for he was three years older than Moses (Ex. vii:7) and it was not so very long after this that Moses was also taken away.

XIV. Between Camps

It was while on the road, before they found a new camping place, that occurred the dramatic incident, so eloquent of the Gospel, about the brazen serpent.

We are accustomed to speak of this as a very simple presentation of the Gospel. What boy evangelist has not preached on the serpent of brass? And yet it is, probably, the profoundest and most far-reaching of all the pictures of the Gospel given in Israel's history.

For, notice, it occurs at about the end of their wilderness journey. This was now the *twelfth* time they had been guilty of murmuring. So their sin seems irradicable: it seems to be in their very nature.

"And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way" (Num. xxi:4).

Edom was Israel's brother, but they were not people of faith. Physically they were just as much of Abraham as Israel was. But they were not walking by faith, nor bearing the true testimony. Esau and Edom represent the kind of Christians and the kind of nominal ministers of Christ who, though by profession of the same race as the real church of God, do not make faith their rule, but see with the world's eyes, and act by the world's maxims.

Israel was forbidden to fight them. So when Edom, so unkindly, refused to allow Israel even just to pass through their country, although they promised to keep strictly to the main road, Israel was forced to turn southward and take a long round-about road. It it was this that so wearied the people's spirit that they were tempted to murmur.

The Lord chastised by sending fiery serpents. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people."

The Lord did more for them than their faith ventured to ask—He provided a remedy for those already bitten.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”

The water from the smitten rock, “the bread from heaven” to be had just by picking it up, and even the blood of the Passover lamb placed over the door, are simple types, easy for faith to grasp. But this of a serpent, that was not really a serpent, but yet looked like it—shone in the sun as a “fiery” serpent—is difficult. As is shown by the fact that it takes us years of wilderness experience; repeated failures and murmurings, before our hearts discover the depths of our need, and our faith, at last, finds that deep need has been provided for.

It is easier for us to grasp Rom. iv:35 than what it is to grasp Rom. vi:6. And the road to Rom. viii lies through Rom. vii.

The brazen serpent shows us the remedy for the sin that is in our very nature. We have all been bitten by the serpent. Man is *not* naturally good: but is naturally bad, though that badness is held under restraint by many influences and does not always display itself. Even though Eddyism should bring the whole world to its way of thinking—or, rather, of saying—this would not change any facts. Men would still murder, still commit adultery, still defraud.

The converted man is self-deceived at first. He thinks that now that he has willed to “give his heart to God,” that heart will have no lingering regrets for other things. Only by bitter experience of repeated murmurings does he reach the firm conviction “that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. vii:18).

How comforting then, how hope-reviving, to find that Christ not only “paid the debt” for past transgressions, but that He has also, *as Sin, suffered in Sin’s stead!* Died for what I am, as well as for what I have done (Rom. vi:6). He was the real serpent of brass, “in the *likeness* of sinful flesh,” and thus by suffering *instead of* Sin in the flesh, bears the condemnation, and enables the Holy Spirit to pronounce the verdict, “There is therefore now no con-

demnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii:3 and i).

"When he looketh upon it, shall live." Then it is not the mere knowledge of such statements as Rom. viii:3, or 2 Cor. v:21, that helps us. There was to be the gaze, the eager, yearning gaze of a man who felt that he had been bitten and who believed that he was on the brink of eternity. Whether those Israelites had any deep heart faith in God when they looked, does not affect the value of the type. To them these things were but physical happenings. To us they are pictures of all the soul's conflicts, failures and remedies. They did not have John iii:14 by which to interpret it. We have, and we have John vi:40—"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which *seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.*"

It is evident that but a few saw Him with their physical eyes, and the mass of those who thus saw Him, cried, "Crucify him." So even in those days the "seeing" He spoke of must have meant the intelligent grasp of the mind that saw in Him, not what He was physically, but saw Him as God's anointed—saw Him with "the eyes of the heart" (Eph. i:18 R. V.)—resolved to trust in Him as God's anointed one.

We have seen thousands passing in procession before a life-sized crucifix. We have seen them bend and devoutly kiss the painted wounds. But did they see HIM? By our daily acquaintance with many of them, we knew they did not. We knew their acts of apparent devotion were done with the hope of wiping off some of the score of past sins. We knew that the Church which gives them painted crucifixes condemns as rank heresy the statement that we are saved only by faith in Christ, and by faith in Christ only.

Oh, to get people to look with the eye of the heart at Christ, the sinless one, made to be sin for us, on the cross! Perhaps we would be more successful in leading others to look, if we would look more fixedly and more triumphantly ourselves. It may be we know so much that we can hardly follow Paul sincerely, in saying, that he would not know anything among the disciples but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Oh, to be able to say with the apostle, "sep-

arated unto the gospel of God!" Separated from all the flesh's repinings as well as from all of its ambitions! Separated from any care as to the world's frowns, as well as from desire for its applause! Separated from the love of theological statements and from pet schemes of prophecy! Separated to the Gospel in such a sense that the immense reality and the immense meaning of that uplifted figure of one dying on the Cross, the Just for the unjust, the Sinless for sin, would color all our speech and all our effort with that deep crimson color!

"When he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. "The action of the poison was nullified: the normal condition was restored. Paul knew Christ especially as the Risen One. Yet it is evident that he had gazed long, and ardently, and believingly at Christ nailed to a cross as the judged One—judged for us; as the accursed One—cursed with the curse due to us; as the dying One—He who had never tasted of the forbidden tree, tasting the death it produced. And Paul's spirit was illuminated by the Holy Spirit to understand that the sinner who trusts in the judged One shall escape the judgment day; that he who gazes with the eye of faith at the accursed One is exonerated from the curse; that he who believes in the dying One, passes from the kingdom of the death-dealer (Heb. ii:14) into the kingdom of the life-giver (John x:10).

Life, LIFE is our's. We are out of the whole region of death if our faith would but clutch at it. Paul seems to be *deeply* impressed by this, for he often alludes to it. Remember! he says to Timothy, that is, Look upon! gaze fixedly at "Jesus Christ of the seed of David, *raised from the dead*, according to my gospel" (2 Tim. ii:8). Go forward, attempt, endure all things in the power of this life that has conquered death. This he has already emphatically declared in the first chapter: "But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished (annulled) death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (i:10).

These *results* of His dying for us He taught beforehand, as we find recorded in John, but the *process* could not then be explained.

One of the strongest of these statements is that in John x:10.

The thief that comes only "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy," surely must be the devil. Are we not right then, in inferring that His own work of giving life, and that life in abundance, will do the very opposite of that which the devil does? That is, instead of stealing, He will enrich us; instead of killing—and this must have been physical killing, for the spiritual is in the next clause—He endows with life; instead of destroying, He gives us the life more abundant, the Life eternal.

Probably most all of the readers of this book have already looked at the brazen serpent. It is also very probable that every one of us need to look again, and more fixedly, and more intelligently, and more *believingly* and consider if there is not more in the promise "when he looketh upon it, shall live," that we have yet made ours.

XV. Arnon and Beer

We are now drawing near the end of Israel's wilderness experience proper. The twelfth, and last, time of their murmuring is followed by their initiation into warfare. It is a transition period. Instead of a record of repeated privations, we have the conquests and failures incident to warfare. And the brief word said as to the brooks of Arnon may be meant as a prelude to this new life of warfare.

"Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, What He did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon" (Num. xxi:14).

We know from Malachi iii:16 that God has other books besides the Bible. The Bible is His book on earth, given for man's guidance. But He also has books in heaven. Every believer has his name written in the Book of Life, and this is the most important thing. But we feel grateful if the Lord also puts our names in the "book of remembrance," as being one of those who remember His name. Have we not also the holy ambition to find our names written, as soldiers, in the book of the wars of the Lord?

The suggestion made to Israel (and to us) by this verse is, we believe, that just as it was God that fought for them at the passage of the Red Sea, so it will be God who is fighting for them in the warfare now commencing against the Amorites and other idolators. That it was God who did it all at the Red Sea was manifest to everybody. But now it will *seem* to be Israel doing it all. Yet that it is God who gives them the victory will be manifest in the vicissitudes of the campaign. When they are advancing in faith and humility, victory will be theirs. When they are self-confident and coveting spoil for themselves, disaster happens.

The lesson that follows this immediately about Beer is the same—it will be really God who gives them the water, even though, this time, instead of gushing from a hard rock, it springs up from the earth when they dig for it. "And from thence they went to Beer: this is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, 'Gather the people together and I will give them water.' Then Israel sang this song, 'Spring up, O well! sing ye unto it.' The princes

digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves."

There is such a multitude of princes, or leaders, teachers, or shepherds in the great, great affiliation called Christianity, that the people may be puzzled to know which of these princes do really dig wells into which God gives refreshing water. Princes and leaders are now digging very grand and costly wells in various parts of the country, equipped with a vast amount of machinery (not material machinery of iron, and yet not purely metaphorical, either). Will they get water? It is too soon to say yet. There are, already, a few rivulets seeping into the well, but they seem to be draining from *other*, less pretentious, wells, dug with painful labor by humble and poor servants of the Lord, to whom *God* gave fresh water, *spring* water, direct from the Rock.

These grand contrivances have, in the past, ended by becoming laboratories of poisons—witness, Harvard, which was commenced distinctly as a Christian institution to furnish ministers. But charity believeth all things, hopeth all things. So let us hope that, made wise by the failures of others, such precautions may be adopted that, even though the water issuing may not be very fresh, it shall be pure and free from death-conveying matter.

Nevertheless let those shepherds who have heard the cry of the sheep for water, cease not to dig "by the direction of the Lawgiver," so that fresh water, *spring* water, ("Spring up, O well!") may be provided in abundance for the humblest of the sheep—even for those who cannot pay forty dollars (or was it sixty?) to get the fully equipped course, with diploma, as advertised by one of the grand wells.

XVI. The Plains of Moab

This was the Seventh, and last, of the principal camping places of Israel, after they had left Sinai. The list given in Num. xxxiii names a great many places. But very few of these have any incident connected with them in the history given of them in Exodus and Numbers. So it is assumed that many of those names merely note the lodging place of a night, not an arranged and proper camping ground.

“And from Ramoth in the valley that is in the country (field) of Moab, to (by) the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon (the waste)” (Num. xxi:20).

Here they stayed a long while, or, at least, here a great many things happened to them. We will note only those things which, in some way, are connected with the name of the camp ground.

XVII. The Manner of Warfare

They had already been warned not to meddle with the Edomites, for they were descendants of Esau, own brother to Jacob. But Edom would not even allow Israel to pass through their country (Num. xx:17), so that Israel was forced to make the wearisome journey that was the occasion of their last murmuring (Num. xxi:4). There are children of God in Christendom who correspond to Edom, and whose opposition to those who try to walk and to do service for the Lord on the principle of faith, is the chief cause of the difficulty of the path. Nevertheless, just as Moses would not let Israel fight them, so we should refrain from attacking those who are believers in the Lord Jesus, even when their opposition is as aggravating as Edom's was.

But now they have to meet the Amorites, that great nation of Caananites whose iniquity was not yet full in Abraham's day. But now, after 470 more years of God's patient endurance of their wickedness, the blow was to fall.

They were to offer them peace, but were to smite if the offer

was rejected: "And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying, Let me pass through the land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's highway, until we be past thy borders. And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness; and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok" (Num. xxi:21-24).

The ambassadors of Christ are conveyers of good news; their's is a ministry of grace. Yet if the ministers of false religions, already occupying the place in men's consciences that only the true God and Jesus Christ, the Sent One, (John xvii:3) should occupy, if these should attack the preaching of the Gospel, then the preachers of the Gospel are to defend the truth, and exterminate every vestige of the Satanic worship.

The commentary on their journeyings and beginning of warfare, which we find in Deut. ii:4-25 reveals some very remarkable principles about God's government of nations. Remarkable even when taken in a strictly literal sense. Even more so when applied in a spiritual sense, as meant to depict the manner of the wars of the Lord.

That Edom was not to be interfered with is easy enough to grasp, because Esau was a legitimate descendent of Abraham, although out of the line of promise; which means not that Esau was not saved but that he was not in that stream of blessing that was to convey spiritual blessing to all the nations of the earth.

But there are two other nations mentioned which were not to be attacked: the Moabites and the Ammonites. Of Moab it is said, "Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle; for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession." A similar thing is said as to Ammon. "Distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the

children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession" (Deut. ii:9 and 19).

These restrictions must have seemed to the Israelites to be arbitrary and fanciful, but God had his reasons, and their place was to obey. Likewise there are Christian workers today, who sneer at distinctions, and want to regard all fields and all conditions of men as alike. For example, they sneer at the recognition of the condition we call Christendom, for they do not find it in 1 Cor. x:32. But the reason it is not in that verse is so simple—it did not then exist! It is an *after* condition, consequent upon the marriage of the Church with the world. Then the apostate Israel was what Christendom is today: that is, a *nominal* people of God, which does not profess spiritual regeneration (neither did Israel) and yet which claims to be Christian.

We believe that this is the true interpretation of Matt. x:23, and that there are still cities in Christendom which have never heard the Gospel. But we should go to them, not to attack their priesthood and idolatry but to preach the Gospel; attacking only when attacking becomes necessary as defense of the truth. This rule has been largely ignored, and the result is—well, we will not say what the result is, for this would take us out of our line of exposition.

A simple way of applying these principles would be: Let each missionary, or other worker, look to the Lord as to where his field is to be. It may help him to solve this question if he will pay attention to *facts*. For instance, let us suppose that Spanish America in general is before your mind. But, what part is the question. You have read reports from missionaries in Central America, and as that is the most accessible of all Spanish lands, you resolve to go there. But, stop! Do you know that a Mission which really knows and preaches the Gospel is there, and God *has given* them results? Why interfere when other places further on are vacant?

This passage (Deut. ii) was very helpful to ourselves when we had to decide between a very enticing field near by and one a long, long way off. It led us to seek the latter.

So Israel did not make war on the Ammonites nor on the Moabites. Although when the Moabites became somewhat linked with the Midianites, these had to be punished for having enticed Israel into sin (Num. xxv:18 and xxxi:2).

Although it is the most easy to apply these principles to the foreign missionary work—because they can be applied literally to possessing certain fields—we doubt not that we should also apply them to the home lands. Here we cannot apply them literally (or only in rare cases), but we may apply them thus: To whom has our Lord Jesus given a testimony about the Lord's coming? Then supposing you realize that He has given you a special testimony on this line, see to it that in giving *your* testimony you do not make war on that of your predecessor. But if the simple Gospel is your testimony, be careful to carry it on in a way that does not antagonize others, in that locality before you, who also preach the Gospel. Whatever be your own line of testimony seek to know those who already are God's witnesses to that line of things, and give them recognition.

Do not make war on *any* real servant of Christ, even though he, like Esau, does not follow the line of faith.

Let your attacks be directed against those cults which destroy *fundamental* truths, and which set up for worship ideas of God and Christ that are so untrue that they really constitute idolatry, even though no images are used.

But—so some readers will be thinking—your interpretation restricts the application of this warfare to those who have felt called to the Lord's service!

We answer, was not all Israel required to meet the Canaanites? Was the fighting left to Joshua and the other generals and captains? Not all are missionaries, not all are preachers, but *every* Christian should take a real, hearty interest in *some* branch of the Lord's work, and *help* to fight the warfare against the strongholds of Satan. It will save them from morbid self-occupation—the brooding over their misfortunes and analyzing their inward sinfulness.

XVIII. Moab

"And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho" (Num. xxii:1).

This was their last formal encampment on the wilderness side of Jordan. Many things happened there—they must have been there a long while, for it covers 15 chapters of the book of Numbers and the whole of Deuteronomy.

Of the law given there we will say nothing. We will confine ourselves to the incidents connected with this camping ground. There are so many that we will give but a brief summary of them, regarding them all as forming a whole, meant to show us things that must be taken to heart, if we ever are to cross Jordan and enter the entirely different experience of assuming the heavenly position and battling the hosts of spiritual wickedness in heavenly places that dispute the possession (Ephes. vi:12).

The chief incidents are seven:

1. There are unsent prophets of the true God, who prophecy as a business (2 Peter ii:15).
2. Sickness in the assembly through refusal to judge the leaders of evil.
3. The census—showing that the great majority of Christians die in the wilderness.
4. Women also have their inheritance in the Lord's service.
5. There are Christians who will fight for the heavenly calling, but will not adopt it as their own.
6. Ordination of men qualified to lead in the war in Canaan.
7. Moses may see the land but they cannot be the captains to lead in *that* warfare.

One. The first incident is about Balaam and his message. We need but to say here that the allusions to him in 2 Peter and in Jude certainly warrant us in taking him as a picture of those prophets of the true God, whom He never sent, but who have of themselves adopted it as a business. Their inclination is to curse God's people. But our God can turn it into a blessing. That Balaam

wished to go and gain Balak's reward is evidenced by the way he views God's answer to him: "the Lord *refuseth* to give me leave to go with you" (Num. xxii:13); and when God sought to hinder his journey by circumstances, he persisted in forcing his way (xxii:25).

There always have been Balaams in all ages. The princes of this world have never lacked the aid of bishops and popes who have willingly cursed the heavenly people for the sake of the reward that Balak can bestow.

But, it may be objected, Balaam did *not* curse God's people, but blessed them. Yes, that was because we might perceive the meaning of the picture, and thus have faith to rest assured that the modern Balaam's curses shall be turned into blessings by the marvellous power of the providence of God.

Two. In Numbers xxv:3-4 we read, "And Israel joined himself to Baal-Peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel."

But they did not do this, and sickness broke out among the people, and it spread, and spread, till 24,000 had died of the plague. It stayed when a son of Aaron the priest slew Zimri, "a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites."

So, while the Lord had said, "Take *all* the heads of the people," He accepted as a sufficient example and judgment, the summary execution of *one* of these leaders. We therefore infer that had but two or three of these been apprehended at the beginning, the lives of 24,000 of their followers in evil would have been spared.

With 1 Cor. xi:30 to guide us, we feel safe in saying that if the churches and assemblies would judge the *leaders* in apostacy and rebellion there would not be near the amount of sickness there is among Christians.

Four. In chap. xxvi a new census of Israel is taken. There were found to be 624,730 grown men. "These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.

But among them there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun."

Here is a vivid example of the importance—the intense, overwhelming importance—of the right interpretation of Scripture. For if dying in the wilderness is a type of a professing Christian being *lost*, how few, then are the saved—two out of 600,000! How discouraging then, how almost hopeless would seem the final arriving at the land of rest!

But Paul's interpretation of it in 1 Cor. x applies it to true Christians, such as do indeed eat spiritual food and drink of the spiritual Rock, which is Christ—such as have been baptized in the cloud (the Holy Spirit) and in the sea (Christ's death as figured in baptism). Now, the people who have fed upon the heavenly manna, have eternal life, for "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John vi:51).

People who have drunk from the spiritual Rock have in them the fountain of water springing up into everlasting life (John iv:14).

People who have been baptized in the spiritual cloud, have been baptized into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. xii:13) and are His members, joined to Him, their Head, in heaven (Col. iii:3).

People who have been baptized in the Red Sea of His blood have died with Him, and if that baptism was a confession of a genuine faith, they shall surely, one day, share His resurrection (Rom. vi:5).

Therefore as all these things mentioned—the cloud, the sea, the bread, the rock—are figures of a positive and eternal salvation, we are warranted in taking the calamities that fell upon the disobedient Israelites as figures of *discipline* amongst true believers. This interpretation is strengthened by what Paul says in Heb. xii:5-8 about Chastisement, for he explains that it is a proof that you *are* God's child, and not children that cannot be legally recog-

nized. The government of the Father takes cognizance of the faults of His own, real children and disciplines them.

But unrepentant mankind cannot be legally recognized as children, although they are, as to their origin, the offspring of God (Acts xvii:28). But He is ever ready to recognize the rebel prodigal when he returns, and to say of him, This, my *son*, was dead and is alive again (Luke xv:24).

So, interpreting all the chastisements that befell Israel as figures of the Father's discipline among His own children, they do not contradict the thousand plain assurances of the eternal salvation of the believer that we find in the New Testament.

How then, *ought* we to apply this sad summary revealed by the census? In this way—the wilderness experience is familiar to all Christians, for it is the ever recurring experience of our weaknesses and necessities, and the many experiences of our Father's mercies and supplies. But that indeed few Christians ever attempt crossing "Jordan" and entering "the Land," is shown by the fact that the custom of applying Jordan to death, and Canaan to Heaven, is almost universal.

When we come to Israel's final camping ground we may perceive what must be the sense in which the Christian believer is expected to take entering the Land. The fact that the great majority of our hymns regard the promised land as the Paradise beyond the tomb, is sufficient proof that the number of those who do *not* so regard it must be very small. In other words, the number who say, "Let us go up *at once*, and possess it" (Num. xiii:30) bears today pretty much the same proportion to the mass as it did in Moses' day.

But let us not overlook the *encouraging* lesson—Joshua and Caleb did *not* die in the wilderness. Although they had to go back with the unbelieving nation and share, in a measure, the discipline, they were preserved until they should be privileged to use the faith they had shown, and see something of the triumphs of Israel, as they had seen of its trials.

Four. "The women also may have an inheritance in the Land" (Num. xxvii:1-11). "Then came the daughters of Zelophehad"—

and after giving their reasons, say—"Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren."

Their zeal for a share in the inheritance of the Lord was commended. Would they ever have obtained it if they had not in this formal and public manner pleaded for it?

Such is the natural egoism of the male that he has ever sought to keep woman entirely for his *own* service, and has made him jealous of any *other* ministry that might divert her from her ministry to himself. We refer not to society, but to the Church.

This is sad. But it is also sad that woman should so readily sink into this place of nonentity. Perhaps the flesh readily grasps the excuse to dominate over the Spirit's yearnings for service and honor in the eternal things. To just sink into nothingness is *easier* than a life of prayer, and hoping, and agonizing, and venturing. Let her be assured, she will not get her due place until she demands it. We refer not to "feminism," nor to the world of politics, with which lines of feminine activity we have no sympathy, but exclusively to the Church, to the things of God, to evangelical service, and to the warfare across Jordan against the spirits of evil who dispute our entrance into the heavenly places.

Let the sisters read the New Testament for themselves, and inform themselves at first hand of what it says of their praying, their prophesying, their share in Gospel work, their share in deacon work, etc. And then, if perusaded, assert their prerogatives, and decline to be treated any more as simply useful to fill a chair and to contribute to the expenses, but having no voice in any matter.

Five. The example of the Reubenites and Gadites deliberately preferring and demanding an inheritance on the wilderness side of Jordan may have been given to prepare our minds for similar classes of people amongst Christians. So we must not be stumbled by it, nor lose heart, if we should see today many who are willing

to take up the battle against evil spirits, and who display a most commendable zeal for orthodoxy, but who do not adopt Heaven as a possession in which to dwell.

To these Reubenites the meadows of the lowlands, so well adapted to cattle raising, seemed something tangible, real, something worth having. And all the holy promises of God, made to Abraham, and repeated so often to Israel, of Canaan, the land sanctified by Abraham's wanderings and by God's wonderful deliverances there, did not seem so sure as what their eyes saw. And they seem to have had no conscience whatever of their manifest indifference to the spiritual blessings of God's presence with them and His approbation of them.

Just so today there are—we have heard them with our own ears—believers who regard those statements in Ephesians as to our being raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places as simply a beautiful ideal, a something entirely too vague to be adopted by us and put to a practical use.

“Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle; the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation saying, . . . If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan” (Num. xxxii:1-5).

At first Moses is shocked by the request, and complains against them, “Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given unto them? Thus did your fathers when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land.” But, finally, when they minutely explain to him that they will go on, armed, with the rest, and will not return to take up their possession until the land is subdued, and the other tribes have also their possession, then Moses is appeased, and grants them their request.

But we notice that there is no record of Moses having consulted

the Lord about this matter. Whereas when those five women had pleaded for their inheritance, Moses consulted the Lord before he gave them an answer.

And we notice that in Moses' blessing pronounced upon the twelve tribes just prior to his death, the blessing of Reuben is the tamest and shortest of all: "Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few." That was all! Whereas the blessing on Joseph occupies 29 lines, and that of Levi 23 lines. Blessings of every kind are invoked upon their heads. But for Reuben it was sufficient to say, "Let Reuben live, and not die."

Let us *not* imitate Reuben: let us serve the Lord whole-heartedly. Let us cross over Jordan, not just to fight there, but to *live* there; to cast in our lot for ever, with all the Lord has designed for His church.

Six. Appointment of successors. In Num. xxvii Moses, being warned that his time had come to depart this life, pleads with Jehovah, "the God the spirits of all flesh," that He would appoint a shepherd for the congregation. God appoints Joshua, and Moses gives him a charge.

Then in Deut. xxxi the *Lord* gives Joshua a charge: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that *I may give him a charge*. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle." Then follows a prophecy as to the future apostasy of Israel. Then Moses "gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee."

So we see that the "charge" Moses gave Joshua was in the name of Jehovah. In fact the "call" came from the Lord, and Moses but recognizes the Lord's choice.

Paul laid his hands upon Timothy and pushed him forward, associating Timothy with himself in his work, and deputing

Timothy to continue his special line of teaching (2 Tim. i:13, ii:2, iii:14).

This is "ordination" as found in Scripture: one servant of the Lord recognizing the grace of the Holy Spirit in another, and exhorting him to diligence and faithfulness. A very different thing from a humanly educated ministry, humanly authorized as official agents of a specific sect.

Seven. There may be true servants of the Lord, after Moses' pattern, who, though they may view "the Land" from afar, can not lead the Lord's people into it.

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountains of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land . . . And the Lord said unto him. This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither" (Deut. xxxiv:1-4).

Moses' fault at Meribah, when he failed to grasp it that God was then dealing with Israel in pure grace, is repeatedly told us, so that we may be impressed by the seriousness of it.

Yet, although this reason for not allowing him to enter the land is so plainly stated, and so many times repeated, there are a multitude of pastors and teachers who, so to speak, smite the Rock instead of speaking to it, and who call God's people "sinners" when God, viewing them in Christ, calls them saints.

Well, they too, and not only Moses, do not enter "the land." They all die in the wilderness.

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Baal-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

So the "prayer" that Moses wrote (Psalm xc) in a time of discouragement, when he was a shepherd in Midian, in which he imagines his hoped-for work was gone from him, as he was nigh

80, he was near his end, turned out to be quite a mistake. God did not use him till he was 80, and then he granted him a literal answer to his prayer, "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." He was 40 years an exile in Midian, and the Lord gave him just 40 years of active and wonderfully fruitful service.

And yet in the face of this great example everybody, even Christians, take Psalm xc:10 as setting the limit to human life, overlooking the positive statement of Gen. vi:3 that the divinely ordained limit is 120 years.

Moses' chastisement ended with his death; not a word of his great failure is ever said in the New Testament. Besides, he got into the land after all! For we are privileged to see him conversing in the land of Canaan with his Lord and Saviour (Luke ix:30).

And thus it will be with all the smaller servants of the Lord who have failed like him, and who are thus spiritually disabled from leading in the conflict about the heavenly places. They cannot enter heavenly places in this figurative sense, but they shall have their place in the Heaven above, and in Canaan, interpreted simply as the rest that remaineth to the people of God.

XIX. Gilgal

“And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal” (Joshua iv:19, 20).

This was their final camping ground. It marks fulfillment of promise, victory, possession.

The events connected with Gilgal are so numerous that a meditation on all of them would become an exposition of the whole book of Joshua.

We will just state those events which are distinctly linked with Gilgal, but confine our exposition to the group of events which are connected with their first five days of Gilgal.

Gilgal celebrates:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The Crossing of the Jordan..... | iv:14-20 |
| New Circumcision..... | v:2 |
| A New Passover..... | v:10 |
| New Bread..... | v:12 |
| Capture of the Chief Fortress of the Enemy. | v:13, 14 |
| There Time Stands Still at the command of faith..... | x: 7-15 |
| Complete Victory over the hosts of evil in the heavenly places..... | x:40-43 |
| Practical Possession of the Heavenly Ground | xiv:6, 14 |

Though there were two incidents of failure while the encampment was at Gilgal, these failures were remedied, and did not hinder the march of victory.

But somehow—we are not told that the Lord ordered it—the camp was changed to Shiloh (xviii:1). Victory then ceased. The power had not been of themselves, but by the angel of the Lord’s presence. **He** had stayed behind at Gilgal! (Judges ii:1).

The lesson is obvious—Gilgal is the place of power. What then constitutes Gilgal becomes an important question.

This we may learn by noticing those events most especially connected with it when they commenced their encampment.

These were: The Crossing of Jordan; Circumcision; Passover; New Bread.

The Crossing of Jordan was the foundation of all the rest—we mean in the spiritual interpretation of these things.

To those familiar with Ephesians and Colossians it could be stated in a few words. Unfortunately, the majority of Christians are not familiar with Ephesians and Colossians. Besides, even if they are familiar with the doctrinal statements of these two epistles, if the Spirit's prayer for them in Eph. i:17 has not yet been answered, they have, as yet, but **seen** the land from afar, as Moses saw across Jordan.

"And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal" (Joshua iv:19). Notice this coincidence. The Passover lamb had to be chosen on the tenth day of the first month (Ex. xii:3). Israel passed through Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. And notice this difference. The first Passover lamb was slain and eaten on the fourteenth day (Ex. xii:6), and *then* they immediately left Egypt (Ex. xii:42). But the crossing of the Red Sea came some weeks afterwards.

This second Passover was celebrated *after* they had crossed Jordan.

The two Passovers have their counterpart in the facts of actual Christian experience. **Every** Christian is under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb, and feeds upon the Christ sacrificed for us (1 Cor. v:7). Possibly some souls who read this do not quite get what we mean by crossing Jordan and the new Passover and new bread. Nevertheless, if they celebrate the **first** Passover they are safe, for they are sheltered by that blood.

In the twelve stones left in Jordan and the twelve stones taken out of Jordan we have the key to the meaning of Jordan. Anyone can perceive that in planting twelve stones to remain in the Jordan (Joshua iv:9) is commemorated the fact that the twelve

tribes of Israel had really been in Jordan. And just so the taking up of the twelve stones out of Jordan and placing them in Gilgal was to perpetuate the memory of the wonderful fact that these twelve tribes who had been in Jordan had also come out of it and were safely on the Canaan side (iv:5-8).

The believer is not only co-crucified with Christ, but co-risen, or "quickened-together-with-Him," as the ordinary version puts it (Col. ii:13; iii:1).

It may help our faith to appropriate this if we bear in mind the simple matter of fact, that it was only the Ark that actually felt the waters of Jordan (iii:15). Before the Ark the waters fled. The Israelites themselves passed over on dry ground (xiii:17).

It is in Colossians that this great act of grace is most plainly taught. Baptism is mentioned as the symbol of it—for in baptism the believer sinks under the water, and then is raised out of the water; raised out by the minister of Christ who immerses him; **it is not his own act** (Col. ii:12). It is not the ceremony itself that has any virtue in it, but the faith that accompanies it. This links the act with the death and resurrection of Christ. So that the believer is declared to be, in Christ, beyond judgment (Col. ii:14-16).

The twelve stones left in Jordan "are there unto this day," the Word says (Joshua iv:9). This calls our attention to the *perpetuity* of our death with Christ. He died for us; we died in Him. His death is a finished, completed transaction. Our death with Him is something done, and that stays done.

But there were also twelve stones from Jordan placed on the resurrection side. Let us lay hold of this, too. We are risen with Christ. In Him we are seated above (Eph. ii:6).

To receive this merely as an abstract truth is nothing. Nor can people be brought into it, by laying it down as a duty, as a law, nor by scolding them into it.

Immediately that they were encamped, God commanded a new circumcision. The Revised Version preserves for us the connection between the circumcision and the twelve stones. For it reads: "At that time Jehovah said unto Joshua, make thee

knives of flint, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time."

Interpreting this spiritually we have to say, Yes, there is a **second** circumcision. There is a first circumcision at conversion (all the people that came out of Egypt were circumcised; verse 5); then, when we have, with a fuller comprehension of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, accepted it as **our** death and resurrection—dead to the elementary things of this world's reasonings and of this world's religion (Gal. iv:3; Col. ii:8)—there is to be, then, an application of it, as of a knife, to ourselves. This is the "circumcision made without hands" of which Col. ii:11 speaks. A certain spurious form of Christianity makes its followers dependent upon the hands of the priest. Only by the sacraments is their salvation, and only by the sacraments is grace conferred, and only his hands can administer those sacraments. The Holy Spirit, foreseeing that for twelve centuries the only Christianity the world would see would be the corrupted form wherein the hands of the priest claimed miraculous powers, led Paul to lay stress upon these points, that the true form of Christianity does not depend upon a priest's hands, nor upon having a sacred house hands have built (Heb. ix:11).

But, such is the tendency of the human heart—many can lay hold of the *death* of Christ and apply it to themselves, but fail to follow it up by grasping the power, to us, of His resurrection. In other words, they can say with the apostle, "We, following Jesus, also are weak in Him who was crucified through weakness." But they lack faith to claim the power of His resurrection, and therefore cannot follow the apostle and assert that "we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you" (2 Cor. xiii:4).

Jesus, forbearing to use divine power for self-protection suffered the natural result of His faithful testimony. But the power of God then intervened and raised Him from the dead. Those who follow in His footsteps will find themselves, by that very adherence to His path of not seeking the patronage of Pharisees and Sadducees and Rabbis, placed in a position of weakness. What then? Shall we draw back? No: let us accept the weak-

ness, the shame, the suffering. But let us also expect the power of God to work for us too, so that we are made superior to all these adverse things. Let us pray that the Spirit's prayer (Ephes. i:19) may be answered for us, individually, that we may experience "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the power manifested when He raised Christ from the dead and made him superior to all earthly and to all Satanic power, and to all things: and this, mark you, for this is the object of the prayer, was for His body's sake, the Church.

Paul claimed that this power would sustain him, and it did.

When we are circumcised the second time the reproach of Egypt is rolled away: "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." Spiritually interpreted, this says, When you have thus applied and believed that you have not only died with Jesus but are also risen with Christ (compare Rom. viii:11) then the reproach of Egyptian bondage falls off. The Lord Jesus' mission for you is fulfilled: the captive has been delivered; the bruised one has been set at liberty (Luke iv:18).

After circumcision comes the Passover. "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho" (Josh. v:10).

The application to the Lord's Supper is simple and self-evident.

We will suggest that it presents to us a picture of Christians, consciously dead and risen with Christ. We do not, of course, mean physiologically conscious, but we mean that the mind, the spirit has grasped and is rejoicing in this, as being a fact in the eyes of God, is feeding upon, deriving strength from the contemplation of the death of Him who said, "And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," and is looking back to that death, from the viewpoint of the realization of those blessings that death was to procure for them.

The first passover was on the *evening* of redemption (Exod.

xii:2, 42; and Luke xxii:15); **this** passover was eaten when the promise to bring them into the land had been **fulfilled**.

There are a multitude of Christians who eat the passover as on the eve of their redemption. We would not have them hindered, for we, too, thus ate it, and *found redemption in eating it thus*. And there are Christians who eat the passover in the wilderness (Num. ix:5). But there are also Christians who eat the passover as being across Jordan; accepting heartily their death with Christ to all the glory of this age, and also heartily believing (and claiming the power of it) that they are, in Christ in the heavenly places, superior in Him to mere earthly circumstances.

“And they did eat of the old corn (wheat) of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased after they had eaten of the old wheat of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year” (Joshua v:11, 12).

The bread of the land of Canaan! The bread of the heavenly land! In the wilderness we eat the bread that came down *from* heaven. But, having crossed Jordan, we ourselves are in the land! And so we feed on the bread that is grown *there*!

Ah, what strength there is in this! This is indeed nutrition!

Let us try and make this simple. Take up the book of Revelation. Skip over all that describes earthly plagues, and ponder the picture of heaven there presented—its throne, its center of all power, the revelation that nothing can take place on earth till that power gives the word, the happiness there described, the wondrous beauty of the scene; the eternal character of their blessings; the absolute felicity, without a tear, the intelligence of those saints in heaven. Then, add, to that contemplation, “All this is for me! I belong there. In Christ, I am there already. He may come any moment, and I shall be translated there in a flash!”

Or read chapter one and two of Ephesians, and say to yourself,

"These things are not **promises**, but they are **facts**, facts that are true of me **now**.

In Christ I have all blessings (Ephes. i:3).

I was chosen in Him before the world's foundation (4).

I have the place of a son (5).

I am accepted in God's Beloved (6).

In Him I *have* redemption, I *have* forgiveness (7).

God loves me with a great love (ii:4).

I have life conjointly with Christ (5).

In Him God sees me as raised with Him, even seated together with Him above (6).

I once had no right to any promises; now all the promises are mine (12).

I have been made nigh by His blood (13).

He Himself is my peace (14).

I have access to the Father through Him (18).

I am a temple in which God dwells by the Spirit (22).

If, as you read such like statements of the Spirit's testimony you receive them in undoubting faith, you will receive strength in your soul, and will, with renewed courage, face the enemy and prepare to battle him.

Let us note that, as yet, not a blow has been struck. No attempt has been made to give battle to the enemy. Is there not in this an important lesson? Does it not make clear that there must first be—

1. The planting of the twelve stones at Gilgal, that is, the recognition that we have, in Christ, passed through Jordan.

2. The practical application of this fact, the circumcision of the cross of Christ, the unveiling of the truth of our carnal condition, and the grasp of faith as to the new creation in Him.

3. A new meditation, a new realization of the meaning, and application to us, of Christ's body sacrificed for us and blood poured out for us.

4. Feeding upon the things indigenous to heaven, done with

all earthly, fleshly, merely human reasonings, for the soul now, the real things are the heavenly ones.

Now we are ready for the warfare. Just as in Ephesians, the warfare against the powers of wickedness in heavenly places is not a method by which the heavenly places are gained, but is a natural consequence of our possession of those heavenly places. So the armor and the warfare are left to the last chapter.

Now for warfare, for the enemy will not retire voluntarily. But there is a way whereby even the citadel can be captured and whereby even time will cease to count if faith asks for it.





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